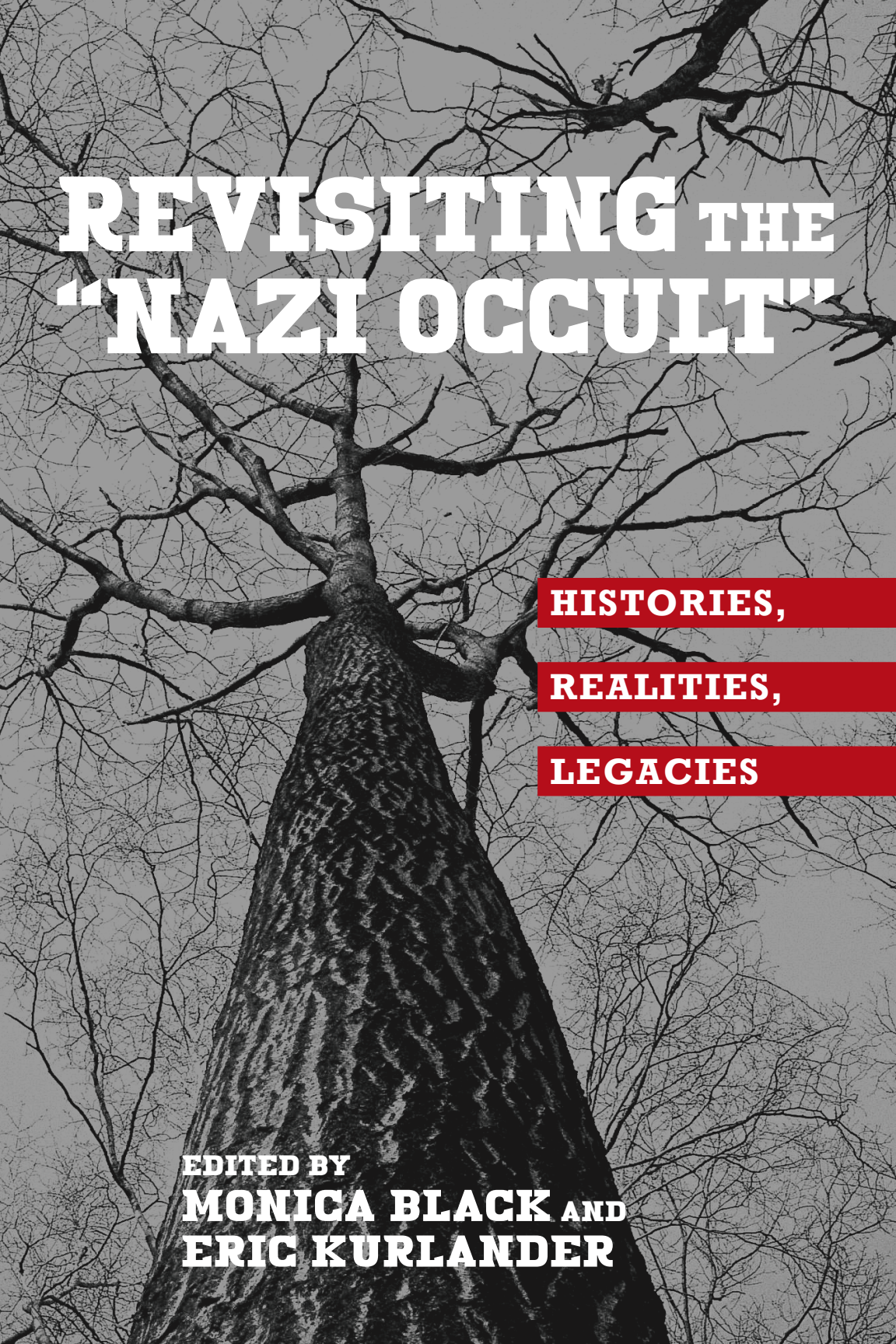
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MONICA BLACK AND
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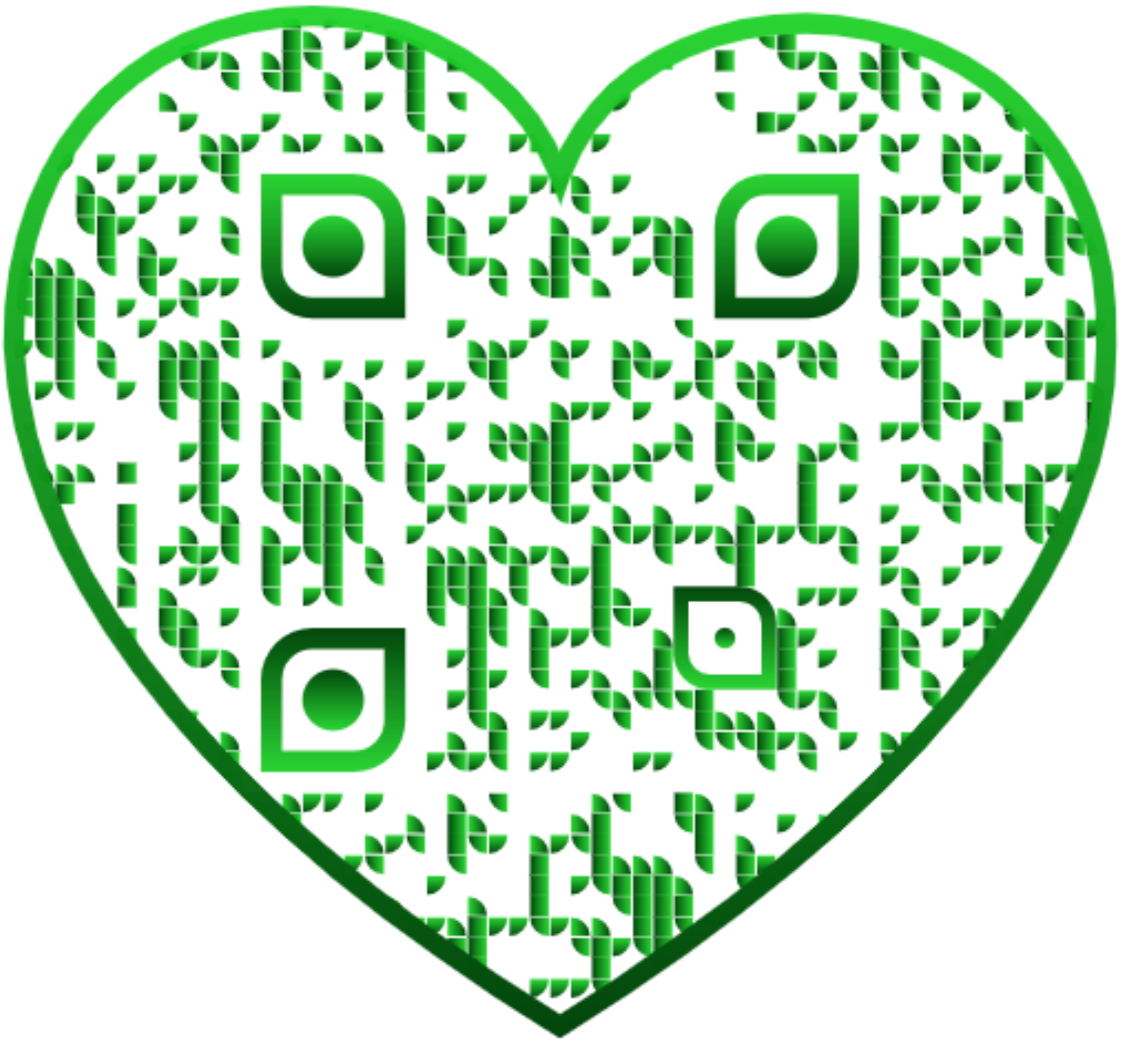

Revisiting the "Nazi Occult"

Histories, Realities, Legacies

Edited by
Monica Black and Eric Kurlander

CAMDEN HOUSE
Rochester, New York

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Acknowledgments

All edited volumes are by definition collective works—the product of fifteen scholars in this case, themselves drawing on the work of hundreds more contributors to the vast literature on National Socialism, German occultism, science, religion, and other disciplines within the realm of German and European studies. As such it would be impossible to thank all the individuals whose scholarship has influenced and informed the contributions to follow.

Nevertheless, we would like to express our gratitude to a few individuals who played a direct role in shaping the volume, providing inspiration, comments, advice, and support during the three years it has taken to bring this project to fruition. These include our friends, mentors, (and, as it happens, respective doctoral advisors), David Blackbourn and Alon Confino, whose cutting-edge work on popular religion, everyday spirituality, and supernatural thinking had a lasting influence on our own thoughts about these issues. We are thankful to Sylvia Paletschek, who opened her University of Freiburg Historical Seminar and Research cluster on parapsychology to our work and helped facilitate contacts with four of the contributors to this volume.

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Introduction

Monica Black and Eric Kurlander

When we, the editors of this volume, solicited essays from our contributors, our main goal was to showcase exciting new historical approaches to that perennial topic of scholarly, pseudoscholarly, and popular interest—the Nazi occult. From supposed SS expeditions in search of the "Spear of Destiny" to Heinrich Himmler's fascination with witchcraft or Adolf Hitler's "Jewish clairvoyant," there has been no shortage of material over the decades suggesting a close connection between Nazism and the occult. Exemplified in such films as *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, computer games like *Castle Wolfenstein*, and comic books like *Hellboy*, the popular image of the Nazi darkling, seeking paranormal assistance in the interest of world domination, persists. The output on these topics, however, while vast, has been decidedly uneven.[1] Many works are more speculative than grounded in archival spadework.[2] The handful of serious studies, meanwhile, tends to focus on the period before 1933, leaving open the relationship between German esotericism and National Socialism in practice, let alone any possible connections to be drawn between Nazism and occultism after 1945.[3]

To be clear from the outset, it is not our principal aim to establish a new consensus on the question of the "occult roots of Nazism," which has traditionally involved determining the extent to which esoteric or occult philosophies, "secret cults," or millenarian networks informed the creation of Nazism or were used to further its goals.[4] We endeavor instead to solicit a variety of responses to that question, responses that both expand on and transcend the traditional range of themes and field of inquiry associated with Nazi occultism. As early as the interwar years, members of a generation of scholars who would be forced into exile to escape the Holocaust—such as Ernst Bloch, Theodor Adorno, Lotte Eisner, Fritz Stern, and George Mosse—were emphasizing the role of mythology, irrationalism, and esotericism in facilitating National Socialism's rise and its crimes. Probably the last and most important work in this genre, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke's *Occult Roots of Nazism*, was published in the mid-1980s. It represented the first serious scholarly analysis of Nazi occultism based on exhaustive research into archival and published primary sources. In tracing the evolution of the occult movement known as ariosophy

from the 1890s through the 1930s, Goodrick-Clarke illustrated a series of clear ideological and organizational affinities between Nazism and occultism, especially when it came to the early years of the party and Nazi leaders like Heinrich Himmler and Rudolf Hess. At the same time, however, Goodrick-Clarke's research, which paid relatively little attention to the Third Reich, suggested that the practical influence of occultism on Nazism after 1933 was limited.[5]

More recent interpretations, especially those published in the last two decades, have acknowledged the widespread popularity of occultism, esotericism, and border-scientific doctrines across the German population between the 1890s and the 1930s. But these more recent studies, exemplified by Corinna Treitel's *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern*, have essentially denied the occult any special role in shaping the history of the Third Reich. Much of this work emphasizes instead the quintessentially modern, progressive nature of twentieth-century esotericism and the Nazis' general hostility to occultism.[6] Important pivot points in both more traditional and revisionist analyses include the appropriation or rejection of ariosophy and pagan Germanic religion in Nazi ideology; the use of or hostility toward astrology, divining, and other border-scientific doctrines by leading members of the Third Reich; and finally the Hess affair—the public relations nightmare that erupted in Germany when Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy führer, parachuted into Scotland to try and bring an end to the war in the West in May 1941—ostensibly at the urging of his personal seer. After the Hess affair, the regime made a significant effort to crack down on all forms of occultism. But debates remain on the decisiveness and longer-term repercussions of this so-called "Special Action Hess," especially insofar as the regime continued to employ astrologers and diviners and to experiment with various border-scientific doctrines.

Many of the contributions in this volume deal directly with the themes mentioned above, and offer both new archival findings and original theoretical interventions in long-standing debates. But all the contributions—even those that deal less directly with Nazi ideology and practice—are keen to reframe the discussion and broaden the horizon of inquiry. Among the volume's strikingly original contributions is a chapter on a Catholic stigmatic who garnered an immense following and grudging respect during the Third Reich, and another on a West German parapsychologist whose media career began in the Third Reich but flourished after 1945. There are chapters on ariosophy, astrology, and monism in the late nineteenth century, on oral lore surrounding the insurrectionary Max Hoelz after the First World War, and on the astonishing popularity of a faith healer received as a messiah after the Second. One chapter looks at the Nazi preoccupation with astrology, world ice theory, and biodynamic

agriculture, while another examines the fascination Nazi zombies hold for some video game designers.

What knits these diverse subjects together? As the list probably suggests, the essays all concern themselves with the occult, esoteric, spiritual, supernatural, paranormal, or parascientific—indeed, in some cases, all of the above. How comfortably each chapter's individual subject wears any of these labels is another matter. The treatment of some topics verges more into the territory of the religious; others, the scientific, border-scientific, fringe scientific, or even the dreaded "pseudoscientific."[7] Some of the chapters focus on artists or intellectual figures or philosophical movements, others on political leaders and state policy, yet others on everyday life. Historically speaking, the essays span the most dynamic and destructive periods of modern German history, but they also reach beyond 1945, past the horrors of both World Wars and the Holocaust, to conclude in the present day.

By bringing together such a diverse group of contributions, our volume seeks to both broaden and historicize the idea that there is some important connection between Nazism and the occult. We have solicited essays that would help us see where the Nazi occult idea came from, what reality, if any, might lie behind it, and what happened to it after 1945. But we are also interested in the present-day preoccupations of people far outside German borders—indeed, principally outside German borders—with the Nazi occult idea. In the popular culture of the United States, and of the West more generally—whether on television, in video games, in music, or in films—Nazism is often treated as though it were more of a cult than the genuine, mass-appeal political movement it was. In some popular films and video games and music, Hitler might even be said to have taken over some of the metaphysical space generally claimed by the devil.

Taken together, the chapters that follow do more than we had originally hoped, because they intervene not only in debates about Nazism, its meaning and memory, but in debates about modern German history more generally. In some ways, in its sheer intellectual-productive capacity, the history of occultism and its many bedfellows might be said to be like the histories of religion, imperialism, or sexuality—easily three of the most industrious and fruitful fields of the past generation of scholarship in German Studies. Studies of religion, imperialism, and sexuality take as their object something extraordinarily complex and multifaceted and often politically ambiguous. All three touch on multiple areas of disputed ontology and contradictory meaning at the same time—ideological, emotional, economic, political, experiential, medical, and scientific, among others. Explorations of these topics often bump up threateningly against identities while continually having a role in reshaping them.[8]

Similar things happen when you start thinking about how to write about matters related to the occult—Nazi or otherwise. Where does the occult end and religion—let alone science—begin? Who is using the term *occult* and when—and is she using it as a cudgel or a call to arms? As a line of defense? As a seriously held religious identity? All of the volume's contributors would acknowledge that whatever the occult is, it is—like science, like religion—a complex "thing" (or set of practices, philosophies, or convictions about the world and how it works) to define. Defining in fact often seems to get in the way of understanding, particularly when one is concerned, as we are, with historical specificity and change over time. In its tendency to reduce questions about connections between esotericism and Nazism to the (often frankly contradictory) opinions and activities of a handful of top leaders, debates about "the Nazi occult" can sometimes resemble aspects of the debate over religion in the Third Reich that was renewed by the publication of Richard Steigmann-Gall's *Holy Reich*.[9]

Rather than seeking to define the occult, the contributors, each in her or his own way, offer two different and important perspectives. First, simply put, that of history, and more specifically cultural history. None of the contributors wishes to define supposed essences; rather, we wish to get at changing meanings and particular uses of occult phenomena in specific moments in time and under evolving circumstances. For that reason, we would like to move beyond one of the central points of contention in German cultural and intellectual history through the early 2000s, namely whether the occult was or was not especially "modern," a product of modernity, or modernity's opposite.[10] Much of the best recent literature has concerned itself precisely with these issues, and has firmly situated the occult in our own times, broadly conceived. That is, in contrast to an earlier literature that was inclined to treat magical or esoteric practices and ideas as belonging to a past superseded by disenchanted, secular, "modern" thinking, we now know that the occult is in some ways born—or at least reborn or reconceived—in modernity. To give just one example: for most of the twentieth century, many scholars believed that a variety of verbal charms used in German folk healing were ancient or, at least medieval, in origin. But in fact many were derived from grimoires like the sixth and seventh books of Moses, which began being circulated in manuscript form in the German-speaking world—and then far beyond—in the eighteenth century. Certain "ancient" practices of folk remedy, in other words, far from having been replaced by Enlightenment-era thought and science, are indeed products of it.[11]

Informed by many influences, including science studies, poststructuralism, and postcolonial and feminist theory, among others, this shift in perspective reflects a heightened sensitivity to historical context. The relative decline or efflorescence of occult forms, philosophies, and movements has more to do with changing social and political context than with

the ebb and flow of modernity or the imagined perfection of rationality (a terrifying thought in any case).[12] For most Germans in the interwar period, from liberal intellectuals like Thomas Mann or Sigmund Freud to Nazis like Himmler and Hitler, there was room for both. Perhaps it is fitting, then, that in some fundamental sense most of the volume's essays could be said to focus on the extraordinarily diverse approaches people in Germany took, between roughly 1890 and the present, to the production of knowledge and *insight*—sometimes spiritual insight, sometimes scientific, but also military, ethnological, artistic, philosophical, historical, and psychological. Sometimes this search for insight took shape in rumor and folklore; at other times in the military-scientific laboratories of the Third Reich; or on archaeological expeditions, in the popular press, in churches, or in the pages of academic journals.

A second perspective our contributors offer on the various phenomena they examine centers on the overlaps or interactions between those phenomena and science, religion, or both at once. Our notion of "science" (*Wissenschaft*), here, in broad terms, is one that focuses on the production of knowledge in specific (and changing) social and cultural milieus, and the practices through which knowledge is constituted historically.[13] Similarly, when contributors talk about religion in this volume, they may be talking about a number of different things, depending on context. They may be talking about the institutions of an established religious community, about specific relationships people had to figures revered for their perceived piety and sanctity, about movements broadly centered on one or another vision of the divine, or about the philosophical ideas through which some people sought to create a meaningful alternative to established religious traditions.[14] Paramount, though, in each chapter, are the meanings the actors about whom we are writing draw from their own actions and beliefs, and how more general conditions pertaining in a given historical moment shape those meanings. The contributors show that esoteric movements and practices evolved alongside and in an often fractious conversation with forms of religion and science that are themselves culturally and historically situated. Many contributors strive therefore to highlight a complex intermingling of religion, science, and occult philosophies, demonstrating that each of these putatively free-standing cultural phenomena is in fact continually formed and reformed, defined and redefined by its supposed opposites.[15]

* * *

And yet—this being German history—we cannot leave the question of "peculiarity" or at the very least cultural and intellectual particularity behind so easily. One of the fundamental premises of traditional scholarship on the Nazi occult has been the perception that the Nazi state represented a

fatal flight into "irrationalism," a wrong turn on the way to "true" modernity (even if we accept the idea of "multiple modernities"). Since its very inception, numerous observers argued that National Socialism conjured up something demonic in the German soul, a fascination with the proverbial Götterdämmerung, a preoccupation with the macabre that spoke to a generation battered by war, political violence, and social dislocation.[16] Of Nazism's origins, the film scholar Lotte Eisner famously wrote,

> Mysticism and magic, the dark forces to which Germans have always been more than willing to commit themselves, had flourished in the face of death on the battlefields. The hecatombs of young men fallen in the flower of their youth seemed to nourish the grim nostalgia of the survivors. And the ghosts which had haunted the German Romantics revived, like the shades of Hades after draughts of blood. A new stimulus was thus given to the eternal attraction towards all that is obscure and undetermined, towards the kind of brooding speculative reflection called *Grübelei* which culminated in the apocalyptic doctrine of Expressionism.[17]

After the First World War, Eisner continued, Germans took a "weird pleasure . . . in evoking horror," a pleasure Eisner ascribed "to the excessive and very Germanic desire to submit to discipline, together with a certain proneness to sadism. . . . Quite naturally the Nazis preferred the national poet Schiller to the world-citizen Goethe" whose Faust was his only sortie into "'sorcery and devilry' . . . Schiller, on the other hand, whose 'Geisterseher' (he who sees ghosts) anticipates the Romantics, has a predilection for the imagery of darkness."[18]

It was essentially in reaction against such outmoded stereotypes that scholars have more recently tended to deny the occult any role in shaping the history of the Third Reich, emphasizing instead the quintessentially modern, progressive nature of twentieth-century esotericism and the Nazis' general hostility to occultism.[19] Of course, we need not accept those stereotypes to recognize two things. First, Eisner was quite right in asserting that mass death in the First World War—deaths unredeemed by battlefield victory—had a devastating effect on German society. This effect went far beyond that occasioned by the war's other burdens, whether the loss of territories, redrawn maps, unfavorable treaties, or war reparations. Germans carried the psychological and existential weight of these millions of deaths, mostly of very young men, into the 1920s and 1930s and beyond, and this contributed to a certain outlook and even openness many people came to share concerning life after death, the existence of ghosts, and a variety of paranormal phenomena.[20]

Moreover, even for those individuals for whom traditional Christianity had lost meaning, German society was far from "secular."[21] By the end of

the nineteenth century, Germans, often equally ambivalent about secularism and religion, sought alternatives to both, and pursued new faiths that might help to reconcile past, present, and imagined future. Even though occultists, German faithers, New Age gurus, and popular preachers rarely expressed themselves in terms that embraced Christianity, they were preoccupied nonetheless by higher powers ("Providence"), mystical forces, and a lexicon laced with references to eastern spiritualities and the beyond.[22] In some cases these preoccupations reflected a sustained belief in otherworldly or supernatural forces. This longing for new myths, for new religious and spiritual experience and insight, helps us to understand the roots, character, and legacies of the Third Reich.

But so too does Germans' equally ambivalent attitude regarding the other defining element in occult thought: science. The argument about the dark, irrational underbelly of modern science and the Enlightenment, made famous by the Frankfurt School, is now a classic trope in discussing the rise of fascism in the interwar period. Popularized with works like Adorno and Horkheimer's *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* and Adorno's *Theses on Occultism* and *Stars Down to Earth*, the idea is that the Enlightenment, in its ambitious attempt to remake the world, likewise produced its irrational antithesis. That is, German social critics, from Weber to Adorno, observed that one by-product of the push toward secularism and science was a renaissance for astrology, parapsychology, and other border sciences (*Grenzwissenschaften*), practiced by individuals "who have gone just beyond the naive acceptance of the authority of science, but who don't know enough, or who have not sufficiently developed . . . anything better."[23] "Semi-erudite" occultists, Adorno argued, were "driven by the narcissistic wish to prove superior to the plain people" but were "not in a position to carry through complicated and detached intellectual operations."[24] Hence occultism "just as other irrational creeds like racism" provided "a short-cut by bringing the complex to a handy formula and offering at the same time the pleasant gratification that he who feels excluded from educational privileges nevertheless belongs to the minority of those who are 'in the know.'"[25]

Many of the contributors to this volume would respond quite critically to these assertions, as well as to the idea that there is anything like an absolute line to be drawn between science and pseudo–science, rationality and occultism, physics and metaphysics along the lines Adorno described.[26] Indeed, the last thirty years have seen a "dethroning [of] positivist narratives about the progress of science" and a tendency to "treat science as a form of culture like any other."[27] The concept of "pseudoscience," in particular, has been criticized by scholars who question whether it is possible to distinguish between accepted natural scientific practice and fields that claim scientific authority but are methodologically disparate.[28] The best revisionist work of the last decade or so—Anne

Harrington's work on Holism, Corinna Treitel's study of the German occult, and Heather Wolffram's book on German parapsychology, to take only a few examples—argues that the story of early twentieth-century German science was less one of proper scholars establishing a more objective, methodologically rigorous, empirically grounded approach to understanding the natural world than it was a battle over the authority and credibility of competing worldviews.[29] Occult phenomena and other forms of "non-hegemonial knowledge production" were widespread and often embraced by liberal-minded Central Europeans.[30]

If one looks at the first half of the twentieth century, many intellectuals associated with serious science and progressive politics—individuals like William James, Sigmund Freud, and Carl Jung—kept an open mind regarding what we now consider occult or pseudoscientific doctrines. From parapsychology, clairvoyance, and astrology to theosophy, ariosophy, and glacial cosmogony, the world was awash with esoteric doctrines that mixed religion and empiricism, science and the supernatural.[31] The sheer size and diversity of the occult marketplace suggests that it tapped into a mass consumer culture out of all proportion with the ostensibly elite, reactionary, secret nature of its practices. Like the parallel resurgence of interest in folklore, mythology, and alternative religions, the occult sciences appealed to Germans of all classes.[32] Finally, the organizations and publishers that promoted these ideas were politically and ideologically eclectic, as likely to include sexual reformers or New Age gurus in their pages as *völkisch* "politicians of cultural despair."[33] One of the most obvious causes and consequences of this shift in perspective is a healthy skepticism toward an older school of thought that emphasized twentieth-century Germany's supposed cultural and intellectual "peculiarities": a susceptibility to occultism and irrationality; an unconscious will to authoritarianism and the macabre; or a deep-seated proclivity toward romantic, backward-looking *völkisch*-nationalism and pagan religiosity.[34]

In restoring a welcome sense of nuance and historical contingency to the debate, however, some contributors ask whether the revisionist work of the past two decades has perhaps overemphasized, on the one hand, the inability of early twentieth-century Germans to discern the differences between science and the supernatural, empiricism and faith, and the potential sociopolitical consequences of eliding such distinctions. One might likewise inquire whether, in "treat[ing] science as a form of culture like any other," we have lost some nuance in explaining the success of certain occult and alternative religious modes of thinking and practice that became popular before 1933, crystallized during the Third Reich, and may have persisted thereafter.[35] Despite the occult or putatively irrational elements of Nazism, in the realm of science and technology the Third Reich was at the forefront of modernity—rockets, submarines, jet engines, nuclear power, perhaps even space travel.[36] But the Third

Reich's particular mix of mainstream science and border science, cutting-edge technology and supernatural reasoning, also yielded, in the words of Adorno, "monstrous scientific fantasies" that help explain the Third Reich's fanatical pursuit of a racial and eugenical utopia, including human experimentation and genocide.[37]

* * *

The book is divided chronologically into three sections. A first cluster of essays, focusing on the period 1890 to 1933, looks at the relationship among the incipient Nazi movement, German society, and a range of esoteric philosophies (including theosophy, ariosophy, astrology, life reform, monism, and parapsychology). A second section focuses on the Third Reich in power, exploring how the occult sciences and various styles of religious belief informed National Socialism as an ideological, political, and cultural system. The third section looks at the continuing interest in supernaturalism and occult ideas in the aftermath of war and genocide. This last section also extends its inquiries up to the present day, looking at some of the unsettling consequences of the connection continually made between the Third Reich and the occult in its many and varied forms. In emphasizing continuities and disjunctures, we hope this book will reopen and reenergize not only narrower debates concerning the occult roots and legacies of Nazism, but also many aspects of our understanding of German cultural and intellectual history over the past century.

Part I: Histories, 1890–1933

The contributions in this section all reject the premise that the occult was somehow at odds with a normative ideal of "enlightenment" rooted in secularism and rationality. The chapters demonstrate rather a fluid and varied range of esoteric ideas and groups, which offered, for many educated middle-class Germans, alternative forms of knowledge and paths to spiritual growth and wisdom. For some, uniting spiritual and scientific forms of knowledge, and bringing coherence to all forms of wisdom, was a major goal. These chapters also suggest, however, that though there is no simplistic historical continuity leading from the occult practices of the fin de siècle to Nazism, many of the symbols and sensibilities of esoteric groups found mass appeal, not least among supporters of the Nazi Party (NSDAP).

Part 1 begins with Peter Staudenmaier's reappraisal of Imperial Germany's esoteric milieu, "Esoteric Alternatives in Imperial Germany: Science, Spirit, and the Modern Occult Revival." Staudenmeier shows that for a broad cross section of educated Germans in the Wilhelmine era, the occult offered a powerfully appealing alternative form of Enlightenment,

promising illumination about the farthest reaches of the cosmos and the innermost depths of the soul. Reworking key themes of modernity, adherents and practitioners of various esoteric philosophies embraced occult worldviews as an antidote to materialism, a way to unite spirit and nature in a reenchanted world while extending the ideals of education (*Bildung*) as a lifelong process of humanistic development.

Perry Myers's essay, "An Elite Class of Thinkers: Monism between Science and the Spiritual in Wilhelmine Germany" follows suit. Looking at the Wilhelmine esoteric milieu's alternative belief systems in a period defined by enormous change, Myers illustrates how many of the era's thinkers attempted to find new syntheses and make a case for reconstituting the congruity of what they termed "knowledge" (*Wissen*) and "belief" (*Glaube*). Through such journals as *Theosophie* (Theosopy), *Sphinx*, *Die Gnosis* (Gnosis), *Lotusblüthen* (Lotus flowers), and many others, Wilhelmine-era thinkers tried to establish new norms for intellectual identity and community consensus—to reevaluate and reinvent strategies of self-representation and identity production. Myers's chapter also sheds light on a religious-secular community discourse that was later co-opted by National Socialism. By taking this milieu seriously, he suggests we might attain new perspectives on German intellectuals' failure to engage in community renewal and resist fascism.

John Ondrovcik's "Max Hoelz Haunts the Vogtland: The Visible and the Invisible in Germany, 1914–21" takes us into the Weimar period, and a very different social milieu, by looking at the role of local knowledge in shaping *völkisch*-nationalist politics in rural Saxony. Ondrovcik's chapter centers on the appearance in Saxony of the terrorist Max Hoelz, who led two regional insurrections in 1919 and 1920. Although he had since disappeared across the Czechoslovak border, tales of his continued exploits on German soil as "the invisible one" and "the evil spirit" continued to circulate, reflecting the enduring currency of well-known supernatural motifs of popular culture and folklore. Ondrovcik uses these motifs together with state police reports about Hoelz to make an argument about imperiled knowledge in the border areas between Saxony, Bavaria, and Thuringia during the revolution—an event, he argues, that was not merely political but epistemological.

Last in this section is Jared Poley's examination of the relationship between National Socialism and the fantastic: "Siegfried Kracauer, Spirit, and the Soul of Weimar Germany." Since the publication of Kracauer's classic *From Caligari to Hitler* in 1947, scholars have a posited a genetic link between the manic horror of the Weimar years and the horrible manias of the Third Reich. Kracauer's early analysis of the connections between Weimar culture and fascism is simultaneously a contemporary's account of how Weimar generated the conditions of its own demise. Like Staudenmaier's examination of the Wilhelmine period, Poley locates in

Kracauer's Germany as many strands of modernism and cosmopolitanism as *völkisch* mysticism and neoromanticism, illustrating how difficult it is to examine one aspect of Weimar culture without the other. And yet, where we now find liberation in the ephemeral products of Weimar culture, Poley observes, Kracauer "saw the looming catastrophe."

Part II: Realities, 1933–1945

During the first third of the twentieth century, Germany was seen throughout much of the Western World, and certainly in the United States, as the very vanguard of science. Certainly the Third Reich could not have been as successful economically or militarily without embracing the best traditions of German science. And yet, there were important areas where the Nazis departed from mainstream scientific traditions, embracing, for good and ill, a range of border-scientific epistemologies and practices. The essays in this section, which take rather different areas of knowledge production into account, reveal the Nazis' pragmatic openness and in some cases ideological commitment to a variety of occult and border-scientific practices. There were limits, of course: some Nazis remained actively hostile to esotericsm while others sought to eliminate any border-scientific groups whose ideologies appeared likely to contravene the state's political or ideological goals.

Fabian Link and J. Laurence Hare's "Pseudoscience Reconsidered: SS Research and the Archaeology of Haithabu" focuses on a quintessential expression of *völkisch* ethnography and archaeology: the archaeological excavations at Haithabu, a former Viking settlement in Schleswig-Holstein. Haithabu became the most significant research project of Heinrich Himmler's *SS-Ahnenerbe* (Institute for Ancestral Heritage) in the 1930s. While Himmler and other Nazi functionaries funded research at sites like Haithabu to support utopianist ideological goals, they enlisted the most reputable scientists to carry out their projects. Thus, studying the Haithabu excavations allows the authors to investigate the "fluid boundaries between science and pseudoscience" by exploring the longstanding epistemological crises that informed Nazi-era science and by asking about the legitimacy of a "division between pseudoscientific, Germanocentric, and *völkisch* ideology on the one hand, and innovative methodology and progressive techniques on the other." After 1945, "pseudoscience" became an important term of opprobrium for researchers seeking to distance their work from the Nazis who had patronized it in order to rehabilitate their academic careers. But as Link and Hare show, "pseudoscience" was in this instance historically flexible and contingent, at times less an analytic than a political category, and above all indicative of a deeper legacy of scientific thought that lent itself to "an ontologization of ideological views."

The theme of science under Nazism is taken up from a rather different angle by Eric Kurlander in "Hitler's Supernatural Sciences: Astrology, Anthroposophy, and World Ice Theory in the Third Reich." Although recent historiography has downplayed the role of esoteric ideas in the Third Reich, Kurlander shows how Nazi leaders embraced a broad range of border-scientific ideas and practices. Himmler, Hess, and Goebbels, for example, hired astrologers and pendulum dowsers to provide military and diplomatic intelligence, enhance interrogation techniques, and instruct German soldiers how to fight. As an antidote to "Jewish" physics, meanwhile, Hitler and Himmler officially sponsored Hans Hörbiger's "glacial cosmogony," also known as world ice theory, which postulated that events in the Bible and the putative destruction of Atlantis were caused by moons of ice hitting the earth. Lastly, Kurlander shows how a wide range of Nazi leaders, citing the influence of the planets on the earth's biodynamic rhythms, sought to create a holistic, occult-inspired agriculture.

Uwe Schellinger, Andreas Anton, and Michael T. Schetsche extend the theme of esotericism and Nazi science in "Pragmatic Occultism in the Military History of the Third Reich." Critical to whether occult practices were tolerated or not, they argue, was how blatantly they contradicted the Nazi worldview—and whether or not they could be subordinated to Nazi goals. Beginning with the activities of the German navy's Pendulum Institute, Schellinger, Anton, and Schetsche explain experiments for the detection of enemy submarines and convoys that were performed with the help of the sidereal pendulum in 1942. They then turn to Operation Oak, which involved the efforts of the Nazi regime to use psychics to locate the whereabouts of the kidnapped Italian dictator Benito Mussolini in 1943. Following a theme running through Link and Hare's and Kurlander's contributions, "Pragmatic Occultism," too, indicates that while some occultists were shut down, many were opportunistic followers and still others convinced supporters of the Nazi system.

Finally, Michael E. O'Sullivan's chapter, "Disruptive Potential: Therese Neumann of Konnersreuth, National Socialism, and Democracy," surveys the career of the Catholic religious visionary Neumann and the broader interplay of religion and science from the 1920s through the Third Reich and into the postwar period. Starting in 1926, Neumann heard heavenly voices and experienced stigmata, bleeding from her eyes, feet, and hands. This made her an object of intense religious devotion and sensational controversy for the remainder of her life. She also allegedly spoke archaic languages during her trances, experienced miraculous cures, made prophecies, and cured others of medical ailments. On the one hand, the rise of Konnersreuth as a major pilgrimage site would have been impossible without the institutional support of priests and officials in the local Catholic Church. However, Neumann's local bishop as well as some other German clergy remained aloof and

sometimes resistant toward the Konnersreuth miracles. By contesting Neumann's authenticity, both her critics and devotees clarified their own positions at the crossroads of modern religious faith and science. National Socialist interpretations of and responses to Therese Neumann, moreover, suggest deeper conclusions about the movement's ambiguous relationship with religious supernaturalism. At different times during the late 1930s, the Nazi Party articulated fascination, contempt, and cautious respect for the Konnersreuth phenomenon.

Part III: Legacies, 1945–Present

Rebuilding Germany after the horrors of the Holocaust and the Second World War was sometimes accompanied by an insistence that national reinvention required suppressing elements of German culture that were not seen to align with a normative ideal of rationality. Yet as this section shows, there remained a strong interest in West Germany, at least, in the paranormal, faith healing, magic, and other esoteric or occult-related topics. The section concludes with two chapters that discuss the often disturbing, ongoing fascination with the Nazi occult idea across Europe and in the United States.

In "A Messiah after Hitler, and His Miracles: Bruno Gröning and Postwar Popular Apocalypticism," Monica Black writes about the eccentric refugee, faith healer, and mystic Bruno Gröning, who took the Federal Republic by storm in 1949. Nicknamed the Miracle Doctor by his followers and the press, the charismatic Gröning, like Neumann, invoked Christian themes, including spontaneous cures. But there had been mystical healers in Germany before Gröning: why was he immediately received as a messiah, his works as miracles? Was Gröning "another Hitler," as some of his critics alleged? Black explores these questions and finds that Gröning's extraordinary reception was connected to many things, but some part of it seems to have been rooted in a longer history of popular apocalyticism and traditions of religious prophecy in Germany. Gröning, as it turns out, was in just the right place at just the right time, making his emergence and works appear—to those inclined to look for portents—to have been set in motion by the hand of God.

Anna Lux's chapter, "On All Channels: Hans Bender, the Supernatural, and the Mass Media," picks up at the moment Black leaves off, looking at the rise of the media-savvy parapsychologist, Hans Bender. Professor Bender was himself fascinated by faith healing and became emblematic of the field of parapsychology in the Federal Republic of Germany—as a faculty member of the Institute for Psychology and Pedagogy at the University of Freiburg and as founder of the Institute for the Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health (IGPP) in that same venerable university town. Nicknamed the "spook professor," Bender had

engaged with the mass media since the Third Reich, when the results of his PhD thesis were published in the popular press. After the Second World War, Bender again initiated contact and cooperation with the mass media: giving lectures on the radio, writing articles for newspapers and magazines, and appearing on television. Exemplifying a continued public fascination with the paranormal after the Second World War, Hans Bender became *the* public expert on the paranormal—on all channels.

Jeff Hayton's "Beyond Good and Evil: Nazis and the Supernatural in Video Games" shows how the association of Nazism with occultism in popular culture today—particularly in video games—reimagines the Second World War. "The Nazi" has long functioned as an antagonist in popular culture, and continues (despite decades of nuanced historical scholarship) to be portrayed almost universally as a one-dimensional stock figure of pure evil. What is troubling about the wickedness of the pop-culture Nazi is that Nazism's historic evil, genocide, is almost never acknowledged. Instead, deviant sexuality, mad science, or occultism usually account for Nazism's moral horror show. Especially important in this regard has been the role of the supernatural as a means of "explaining" Nazi evil. Yet by defining the Third Reich as an empire of *virtual* vampires, werewolves, witches, and zombies, video games that may appear to acknowledge the consummate evil of Nazism in fact produce a problematic "mixture of history and the supernatural" that does quite the opposite.

In "The Wewelsburg Effect: Nazi Myth and Paganism in Postwar European Popular Music," Oded Heilbronner takes us full circle, looking at how postwar incarnations of *völkisch*-esoteric movements that may have contributed to Nazism have now become a breeding ground for neo-Nazi groups in Europe and the United States. Heilbronner maps out mythic fantasies of a pagan, mystical European past as expressed in various subcultures: the Order of the Black Ram and the Order of the Trapezoid maintain the notion of a neoromantic Germanic magical tradition; Michael Aquino and his followers in the Church of Satan travel to Castle Wewelsburg, Himmler's former SS headquarters and the unofficial center of Nazi occultism, to perform magical rites in the castle's Hall of the Dead. But Heilbronner focuses particularly on the music and aesthetics of the English neofolk band, Death in June, and argues that a deep and persistent investment in Nazi occultism is sometimes a source for neo-Nazism. This alone strongly suggests why the links between neo-Nazism and esotericism remain a crucial topic of continued study.

* * *

To sum up briefly, this volume proceeds from the assumptions that occultism has represented—over the many vicissitudes and regimes of modern

German history—a place where science and spirituality met, and that it has been quite possible to subscribe to an instrumental rationality and simultaneously believe in a "science of the soul." We want to be careful about underestimating "the continued passion for wonder, and the ways in which developments in science and technology might incite rather than dampen that passion among all classes" as well as the "intricate interfaces between elite and mass cultures, reason and the imagination, empirical science and the unquantifiable" in Nazi Germany and elsewhere.[38] As Michael Saler reminds us, "The German scientific tradition in the nineteenth century consisted of a mix of empiricism and idealism that was hospitable to the metaphysical preoccupations of modern occultists."[39] The occult roots and legacies of the Third Reich, which incorporated elements from and filled the space between twentieth-century German science and religion, were no different.[40]

Notes

[1] To take a few prominent examples, which vary greatly in scholarly quality, see (in chronological order of original publication): Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1962; orig. pub. Zurich, 1935); Lewis Spence, *Occult Causes of the Present War* (London: Kessinger Publishing, 1940); Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004; orig. pub. 1947); George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology* (New York: Fertig, 1999; orig. pub. 1964); Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier, *The Morning of Magicans* (London: Souvenir, 2007; orig. pub. 1964); Ellic Howe, *Nostradamus and the Nazis* (London: Arborfield, 1965); James Webb, *Flight from Reason* (London: MacDonald, 1971); Trevor Ravenscroft, *The Spear of Destiny* (New York: Weiser, 1973); Theodor Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994; orig. pub. 1974); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Dusty Sklar, *Gods and Beasts: The Nazis & the Occult* (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1977); Cary J. Nederman and James Wray, "Popular Occultism and Critical Social Theory: Exploring Some Themes in Adorno's Critique of Astrology and the Occult," *Sociology of Religion* 42, no. 4 (1981): 325–32; Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (New York: Dell, 1983); Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism* (London: Tauris, 2003; orig. pub. 1993).

[2] See Wilfred Daim, *Der Mann der Hitler seine Ideen gab* (Munich: Isar, 1958); Sklar, *Gods and Beasts*; Spence, *Occult Causes*; Pauwels and Bergier, *Morning*; Ravenscroft, *Spear of Destiny*; Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail.*

[3] See Mosse, *Crisis*; Stern, *Politics of Cultural Despair*; Goodrick-Clarke, *Occult Roots.* Also see Peter Staudenmaier, "Occultism, Race and Politics in Germany, 1880–1940: A Survey of the Historical Literature," *European History Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (January 2009): 47–70; Schellinger et al., "Zwischen Szientismus und

Okkultismus," *Zeitschrift für Anomalistik* 10 (2010), 287–321; Eric Kurlander, "Hitler's Monsters: The Occult Roots of Nazism and the Emergence of the Nazi 'Supernatural Imaginary,'" *German History* 30, no. 4 (2012): 528–49.

[4] Goodrick-Clarke, *Occult Roots*.

[5] Goodrick-Clarke, *Occult Roots*.

[6] Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 210–48; Heather Wolffram, *The Stepchildren of Science: Psychical Research and Parapsychology in Germany, c. 1870–1939* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009); Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals Between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Anne Harrington, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Frederick Gregory, *Nature Lost: Natural Science and the German Theological Traditions of the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

[7] As Michael D. Gordin observes, no one ever calls herself as a pseudoscientist. Michael D. Gordin, *The Pseudoscience Wars: Immanuel Velikovsky and the Birth of the Modern Fringe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[8] A list of a few key examples might include David Blackbourn, *Marpingen: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in a Nineteenth Century German Village* (New York: Vintage, 1995); George Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Helmut Walser Smith, *The Continuities of German History: Nation, Religion, and Race across the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Kris Manjapra, *The Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals across Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Russell Berman, *Enlightenment and Empire: Colonial Discourse in German Culture* (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); George Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Sarah Friedrichsmayer, Sara Lennox, and Suzanne Zantop, *The Imperialist Imagination* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1998); Pascal Grosse, *Kolonialismus, Eugenik und bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland, 1850–1918* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2000); Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth Century Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[9] Richard Steigmann-Gall, *Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See the Discussion Forum, "Richard Steigmann-Gall's 'The Holy Reich,'" *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 1 (January 2007).

[10] Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*; Wolffram, *Stepchildren of Science*; Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Kevin Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-Politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890–1914*

(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Michael Saler, "Clap If You Believe in Sherlock Holmes: Mass Culture and the Re-Enchantment of Modernity, c.1890–c.1940," *The Historical Journal* 46, no. 3 (2003): 599–622; Edward A. Tiryakian, "Dialectics of Modernity: Reenchantment and Dedifferentiation as Counterprocesses," in *Social Change and Modernity*, ed. Hans Haferkamp and Neil J. Smelser (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 78–83.

[11] Michael Simon, *"Volksmedizin" im frühen 20. Jahrhundert: Zum Quellenwert des Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde* (Mainz: Gesellschaft f. Volkskunde in Rheinland-Pfalz, 2003), 147–48, n. 459; Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 11.

[12] To wit: Paul Erickson et al., *How Reason Almost Lost Its Mind: The Strange Career of Cold War Rationality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[13] Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[14] A touchstone for seeing religion as a set of relationships between humans and gods here is the work of Robert A. Orsi, especially *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[15] Egil Asprem, *The Problem of Disenchantment: Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse 1900–1939* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

[16] Lotte Eisner, *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 3.

[17] Eisner, *Haunted Screen*, 8–9.

[18] Eisner, *Haunted Screen*, 95–97.

[19] Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, 210–48; Wolffram, *Stepchildren of Science*; Rabinbach, *Shadow of Catastrophe*; Gregory, *Nature Lost*; Harrington, *Reenchanted Science.*

[20] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Michael Geyer, "Insurrectionary Warfare: The German Debate about a *Levée en Masse* in October 1918," *Journal of Modern History* 73, no. 3 (September 2001): 459–527; Monica Black, "The Ghosts of War," in *Cambridge History of World War II, Total War: Economy, Society, Culture at War*, ed. Michael Geyer and Adam Tooze (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and Monica Black, *Death in Berlin: From Weimar to Divided Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. 62–67.

[21] Until very recently, an "almost primeval narrative" of secularization was "hardwired" into the work of most historians, writes Mark Edward Ruff, "Review Essay: Integrating Religion into the Historical Mainstream: Recent Literature on Religion in the Federal Republic of Germany," *Central European History* 42 (2009): 311. Rather than viewing the processes of "secularism and religious renewal" as mutually exclusive, many historians have now begun seeing them as entirely inseparable processes. See Dagmar Herzog, "The Death of God in West Germany: Between Secularization, Postfascism, and the Rise of Liberation Theology," in *Die*

Gegenwart Gottes in der modernen Gesellschaft: Transzendenz und religiöse Vergemeinschaftung in Deutschland, ed. Michael Geyer and Lucian Hölscher (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), 428. See also Benjamin Ziemann, *Katholische Kirche und Sozialwissenschaften 1945–1975* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), and Benjamin Ziemann, "Religion and the Search for Meaning, 1945–1990," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, ed. Helmut Walser Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[22] See, for example, Eric Kurlander, "The Orientalist Roots of National Socialism? Nazism, Occultism, and South Asian Spirituality," in *Transcultural Encounters between Germany and India: Kindred Spirits in the Nineteeenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Joanne Miyang Cho, Eric Kurlander, and Douglas T. McGetchin (New York: Routledge, 2014); Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement*; Marchand, *German Orientalism*.

[23] Adorno as paraphrased in Denis Dutton, "Theodor Adorno on Astrology," *Philosophy and Literature* 19, no. 2 (1995): 424–30, accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.denisdutton.com/adorno_review.htm.

[24] Adorno, *Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays*, 61.

[25] Adorno, *Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays*, 61.

[26] Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*; Michael Saler, "Modernity and Enchantment: A Historiographical Review," *American Historical Review* 3, no. 3 (2006): 692–716.

[27] CFP, "Science—Wissenschaft," Southwest German Studies Workshop, 2013, http://web.utk.edu/~segsw/2013panels.html.

[28] Dirk Rupnow, Veronika Lipphardt, Jens Thietl, and Christina Wessely, eds., *Pseudowissenschaft: Konzeptionen von Nichtwissenschaftlichkeit in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 42. Also see Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press), 129–56; Rodney Stark, *Discovering God* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004); James Webb, *The Occult Underground* (London: Open Court, 1974); Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 44–49; Williamson, *Longing for Myth*, 12–18.

[29] Wolffram, *Stepchildren of Science*, 17–24, 40–43, 263–64, 282–84.

[30] See "Gesellschaftliche Innovation durch "nichthegemoniale" Wissensproduktion: "Okkulte" Phänomene zwischen Mediengeschichte, Kulturtransfer und Wissenschaft, 1770 bis 1970," accessed June 8, 2015, http://www.uni-siegen.de/mediaresearch/nichthegemoniale_innovation/.

[31] Alexander C. T. Geppert and Till Kössler, *Wunder: Poetik und Politik des Staunens im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag 2011); Steigmann-Gall, *Holy Reich*, 112–13; Williamson, *Longing for Myth*, 294–98.

[32] Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, 57–62, 75–77.

[33] Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, 73–75.

[34] George Mosse, *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 199–200, 205–8; Rupnow et al., *Pseudowissenschaft*.

[35] See Michael Hagner, "Bye Bye Science, Welcome Pseudoscience?," in Rupnow et al., *Pseudowissenschaft*, 50.

[36] Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

[37] Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), 238–44.

[38] Saler, "Modernity and Enchantment," 704–5.

[39] Saler, "Modernity and Enchantment," 709–10; for additional examples, see Geppert and Kössler, *Wunder*; Erik Davis, *TechGnosis: Myth, Magic, and Mysticism in the Age of Information* (New York: Serpent's Tale, 2004); Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America* (New York: Vintage, 2003); David Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of New Technology, 1880–1940* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1992).

[40] Christina Wessely, "Cosmic Ice Theory—Science, Fiction and the Public, 1894–1945." Max Planck Institute for History of Science (2011), accessed June 8, 2015, http://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/en/research/projects/DeptIII-ChristinaWessely-Welteislehre.

Part I.
Histories, 1890–1933

1: Esoteric Alternatives in Imperial Germany: Science, Spirit, and the Modern Occult Revival

Peter Staudenmaier

To many observers today, the world of occult and esoteric groups seems to represent a thoroughgoing rejection of the Enlightenment legacy, irreducibly alien and incomprehensible. Yet for a broad cross section of educated Germans in the Wilhelmine era, the occult and esoteric offered a powerfully appealing alternative form of enlightenment. Esoteric worldviews promised illuminating knowledge about the farthest reaches of the cosmos and the innermost depths of the soul, providing access to hidden sources of spiritual wisdom and profound insight into the secrets of the universe. Reworking key themes of modernity, occult adherents in Imperial Germany embraced esotericism as an antidote to materialism: an alternative approach to knowledge and enlightenment that could reenchant a disenchanted world and extend the ideals of *Bildung*, of education and character formation, as a lifelong process of constantly developing new human faculties. This optimistic image shaped the work of well-known literary and artistic figures as well as obscure occult authors.

A sample of individual biographies and intellectual milieus can clarify the factors that led German thinkers to favor esoteric alternatives to established and academically sanctioned modes of knowledge. The prototypical Wilhelmine occultist was both a spiritual seeker exploring unconventional realms and a practically oriented person responding to scientific discoveries and scholarly innovations, in conjunction with a commitment to traditional values and beliefs. From the artist Fidus to influential publishers like Eugen Diederichs to occult teachers such as Rudolf Steiner or Franz Hartmann, esoteric ideas circulated widely in the Kaiser's empire. Though it has yet to be explored adequately, the historical record reveals a striking fluidity of esoteric traditions in Imperial Germany, with the same figures adopting a wide array of contradictory occult viewpoints, sequentially or simultaneously, while displaying multivalent connections to the "life reform" movement, *völkisch* circles, neopagan currents, and minority strands of Christianity. These esoteric pioneers combined

universal principles and a cosmopolitan outlook with a central emphasis on the unique German spiritual mission.

Much of this neglected history confirms the recent trend of reinterpretation in scholarly studies of esotericism. While an older body of literature from the 1960s to the 1980s emphasized the marginal status of occult thought, newer studies argue that fin de siècle occultism was "closer to the social mainstream than is presently appreciated."[1] According to this newer scholarship, "occultism cannot be written off as a retrogressive throwback or fringe aberration, a reworked 'shadow of the Enlightenment,' but instead must be understood as integral to the shaping of the new at the turn of the century."[2] Rather than "a backlash against the Enlightenment," recent historiography views modern occultism as a "bastard child" of Enlightenment thought.[3] Nor was the modern occult revival a radical break from the past. "Magic and superstition," current research reminds us, "far from being exotic or marginal issues in European history, have always been integral aspects of Western societies and cultures."[4] In the words of a historian of German occultism: "What the occult reveals, thus, is the inadequacy of our categories of historical analysis and the pressing need to rethink the map of modernity to incorporate occultism in a more positive sense."[5]

The ideas and individuals examined in this chapter bear out many of the premises of this recent trend in scholarship on esoteric thought. But the convoluted details of the Wilhelmine occult milieu point to a more complex conclusion, one which vindicates some of the insights of earlier studies. My analysis begins from the basic contrast between these two contending poles: an older literature, which cast German occultism as reactionary and antimodern and therefore illiberal and historically suspect, and a newer literature, which casts German occultism as highly modern and therefore liberal and historically agreeable. I will argue for synthesizing and transcending both approaches by acknowledging that the German occult milieu was an expression of modernity precisely in its affinities for "life reform" and *völkisch* causes and its preoccupation with racial themes. The panoply of esoteric alternatives in Imperial Germany was indeed modern but not thereby harmless and reassuring.

Spiritual Seekers and Science in Transition, 1880–1920

In the decades surrounding 1900, significant sectors of the educated German bourgeoisie—the *Bildungsbürgertum*—were drawn to new approaches in science, philosophy, and academic inquiry, stimulated in part by publishing successes in science popularization as well as by the rapid rate of innovations and discoveries in the natural sciences. In a

period that combined rising German economic confidence with transitional currents in the understanding of science and its relation to society, these new intellectual horizons seemed to offer grand vistas of unprecedented possibility: Might we at last grasp the secrets of the cosmos and the soul? At the same time, research in fields as diverse as biblical criticism, history, and physics unsettled traditional conceptions of knowledge. The modern German occult revival grew out of this ferment, offering a rich palette of solutions to the riddles of the era.

With the rise of the theosophical current touting "a synthesis of science, religion, and philosophy" (the subtitle of Helena Blavatsky's 1888 book *The Secret Doctrine*, a central theosophical text largely composed in Germany), occultist alternatives garnered an increasing number of adherents as well as curious onlookers. Esoteric approaches promised access to hidden sources of spiritual and practical wisdom and profound knowledge about the universe and the human essence, goals to be achieved through the development of higher faculties, meditation, a path of initiation, or other techniques. Practitioners and promoters held that occult methods could be used for personal enlightenment, spiritual enhancement, healing, attaining higher levels of consciousness, discerning the future or past, discovering or recovering secret knowledge of the inner workings of the world, and the cultivation of unseen powers of the soul. Devotees of esoteric worldviews "typically believe that it is possible, at least in principle, to gain direct and unmediated, suprarational and salvational access to the supreme spiritual level of reality."[6] To its enthusiasts, occultism offered to reveal the correspondences between macrocosm and microcosm and unite spirit and nature in a reenchanted world. Esoteric advocates presented their approach as a "nascent science" with respectable forebears and illustrious prospects.[7]

How did such claims—which faced determined opposition—fit within the colorful context of Imperial German culture? Why were they attractive to aristocrats and artists, to educated elites and unconventional Bohemians, to those with academic training and those with creative aspirations, in Germany and beyond? Adequate answers to these questions require a shift in historical perspective toward a more critical and contextualized engagement with the occult in modern German history. A crucial element in the popularization of European esoteric thought was the selective appropriation of the rhetoric of science. The modern occult revival itself can be seen as a product of "the secularization of esotericism" in the post-Enlightenment era, a result of the hybridization of esoteric cosmologies and modern scientific approaches. "The impact of Western processes of rationalization and secularization," in this view, "represents *the* decisive watershed in the history of western esotericism."[8]

But it was particular forms of secularization and science that drew the attention of German occultists from the time of Bismarck onward.

In Wilhelmine Germany, "secularization and religious revival were intertwined."[9] Occult systems offered to reconcile religious and secular trends in a higher unity, bringing together ideas that "seemed to flourish especially on the margins of the academy."[10] Esoteric thinkers reacted to such shifts by incorporating scientific vocabulary into their public discourse: "It is precisely in science that the Esoteric Tradition has attempted to find one of its main sources of rhetorical support."[11] At the same time, occultists positioned themselves as severe critics of conventional scientific approaches. "Polemics against mainstream or establishment science" are "typical of occultism in all its forms."[12]

Mainstream science, in the eyes of esotericists, had been debased by materialism, the scourge of the modern age. This provided a prime opportunity for occult thinkers to stake their claim as proponents of an improved and revived science freed of its materialist distortions. In this effort, esoteric advocates made common cause with two other movements prominent in Imperial Germany, the vibrant assortment of *Lebensreform* or life reform currents and the diffuse but tenacious *völkisch* groups. Life reform supporters preached a message of communal living, alternative education, natural healing, vegetarianism, and similar ideals. Many members of this early middle class counterculture found inspiration in the occult. So did participants in the *völkisch* scene, which overlapped extensively with the life reform movement. Wilhelmine *völkisch* politics promoted a mixture of romantic nationalism, racial myths, and an ethnocentric vision of Germanic renewal. The convergence of esoteric, life reform, and *völkisch* perspectives was a conspicuous facet of "alternative" cultural trends at the time.[13] This far-reaching crossover was matched by a marked porousness in occult organizations.

The Fluidity of Esoteric Worldviews in Imperial Germany

Many individuals drawn to esoteric worldviews in the imperial era affiliated themselves not just with one tendency but with multiple strands of occult thought and practice. Simultaneous or sequential involvement in a variety of esoteric currents was typical rather than anomalous and can be traced to two interrelated factors: the propensity of esoteric adherents to engage in ongoing spiritual seeking, experimentation, and comparison of contending alternatives; and the frequently fractious nature of the occult milieu as a whole. Through these cross affiliations esoteric viewpoints transcended national borders and attracted substantial memberships in Austria and Switzerland in addition to Germany itself. From the splintered continuum of competing theosophical groups to offshoots such as anthroposophy and ariosophy, alongside movements like Mazdaznan and

the *Deutsche Neugeistbewegung*, the German branch of the New Thought movement, the plethora of German esoteric formations regularly traded ideas, activities, and personnel back and forth. Three brief case studies illuminate these dynamics.

German-Swiss occultist Karl Heise was born in Berlin in 1872 and moved to Zurich around 1905, becoming active in theosophical circles by 1907. In short succession Heise joined a theosophical lodge, the ariosophist Guido von List Society, and the Mazdaznan movement, then joined the Anthroposophical Society in 1916. His publications borrowed heavily from theosophist Helena Blavatsky, ariosophist Guido List, and anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner, among other figures, and were published in a wide range of esoteric venues. For Heise, becoming a member of one occult group did not mean abandoning the previous ones. His work presented an amalgam of esoteric beliefs drawn from an eclectic spectrum of sources. By the time of his death in 1939 Heise had left a lengthy trail of occult texts on spiritual, cultural, and political topics, reflecting a typically broad span of esoteric interests.[14]

Like Heise, Harald Grävell (1856–1932) was born in Berlin. He had an extensive university education before turning to occultism and lived at various times in Strasbourg, Vienna, Breslau, Belgium, and England. Grävell was a *völkisch* author who combined theosophical, anthroposophical, and ariosophical themes; his works emphasized life reform principles in an esoteric context. In addition to articles in theosophist journals and periodicals, such as *Prana*—which bore the subtitles *Zentralorgan für praktischen Okkultismus* (Central publication for practical occultism), *Monatsschrift zur Förderung der okkultistischen Bewegung* (Monthly journal for the promotion of occultism), and *Organ für angewandte Geheimwissenschaften* (Publication for applied occult sciences)—Grävell published widely on Aryan racial and religious themes and was a regular contributor to ariosophist reviews. He was also one of the "leading antisemitic-völkisch agitators" in Imperial Germany.[15] Grävell's texts exemplified the connection between occult spirituality and racial ideology.

Max Seiling, Grävell's Bavarian contemporary, was a longtime theosophist, anthroposophist, and ariosophist who turned to Catholic mysticism late in life while retaining an esoteric outlook. In contrast to the stereotype of occultists as unworldly and ethereal, Seiling (1852–1928) was a professor of mechanical engineering for a decade and a half. He eventually became a vegetarian and animal rights proponent, active in the antivivisection movement, and a sympathizer of natural medicine. Like Heise, he was a member of both the Guido von List Society and the Anthroposophical Society. His works celebrated theosophy, ariosophy, and anthroposophy simultaneously, melding them with life reform and *völkisch* goals, and brought together quotations from List and Steiner with passages from Houston Stewart Chamberlain.[16] In the mindset of

Wilhelmine esotericism, all of these sources were congruent and mutually reinforced one another.

The scope of occult interests was reflected across various media. A 1910 poster from the Headquarters for Practical Occultism (Zentrale für praktischen Okkultismus) listed fifteen distinct sections, including astrology, palm reading, divination, graphology, geomancy, alchemical medicine, dream interpretation, and the history of magic, as well as "solar biology" and "astrological pharmaceuticals and herbalism."[17] Astrology, with its combination of the empirical and the esoteric, was a nearly universal component of the occult scene. It could be adapted to any esoteric system and often served as a bridge over the various factional splits. Sometimes astrological lore was presented as "ancient Aryan wisdom" preserved for latter-day Germans by careful occult means.[18] A bond between the stars and the self, between the inexorable operations of the heavens and the vicissitudes of individual fate, seemed to confirm a central esoteric axiom of the mysteriously ordered universe. Grounded in their core subjects, occultists drew connections to a far-flung network of related turn-of-the-century intellectual fashions, from eugenics to monism. Their dedication to "higher worlds," and their hopes of rendering visible and accessible the previously invisible and remote, represented an esoteric version of widespread scientific ambitions of the time. Occultists were not the only ones searching for evidence of things unseen.[19]

Esoteric periodicals from the imperial era offered a similarly diverse profile. The subtitle of the journal *Theosophische Kultur* (Theosophical culture), organ of the International Theosophical Brotherhood in Leipzig, was *Monatsschrift zur Erweckung und Pflege der höheren Seelen- und Geisteskräfte und zur Verwirklichung der Idee einer allgemeinen Menschenverbrüderung auf der undogmatischen Grundlage der göttlichen Selbsterkenntnis* (Monthly journal for awakening and fostering higher powers of the soul and the spirit and for the fulfillment of the idea of universal human brotherhood on the non-dogmatic basis of divine self-awareness). The same press published the *Astrologische Rundschau* (Astrological review), edited by ariosophist Rudolf von Sebottendorf. The journal *Psyche* billed itself as a "monthly magazine for all forms of occultism and all occult sciences, for scientific investigation of occult phenomena in psychic life, as well as for Indian philosophy, theosophy, spiritualism, true ethical culture, natural lifestyles, and social reform" ("Monatlich erscheinende Zeitschrift für den gesamten Okkultismus und alle Geheimwissenschaften, für wissenschaftliche Erforschung der okkulten Phänomene des Seelenlebens, ferner für Indische Philosophie, Theosophie, Spiritualismus, wahre, ethische Kultur, naturgemäße Lebensweise und Sozialreform.") It was edited by Karl Brandler-Pracht (1864–1939), a major figure in occultist and astrological circles, who also edited the *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* (Central newspaper for

occultism), published by the Max Altmann Verlag, the premier theosophical publishing house. *Psyche* frequently appeared with a supplement, the *Astrologische Blätter: Zentral-Organ für wissenschaftliche Astrologie* (Astrological gazette: central publication for scientific astrology).[20]

In addition to regular contributions from Karl Heise, *Psyche* featured pieces by Peryt Shou (pen name of Albert Schultz, 1873–1953), a supporter of theosophy and the *Deutsche Neugeistbewegung*; ariosophist and astrologer Ernst Ißberner-Haldane; and German-Russian author Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch, who was successively a theosophist, an anthroposophist, an ariosophist, an adherent of Artur Dinter's *völkisch* religious movement, a self-described "Christian occultist," and a vehement opponent of esoteric "false prophets." *Psyche*'s Brandler-Pracht was also editor of *Prana* (published by the Theosophisches Verlagshaus in Leipzig) from its founding in 1909 through 1914; ariosophist Johannes Balzli took over as editor in 1915. *Prana* carried contributions from Heise, Grävell, Shou, Hartmann, Steiner, C. W. Leadbeater, Ernst Boldt, and many others. Its pages showed the lasting fascination in German occult circles with the exotic imagined traditions of Egypt, India, and other reaches of the ostensibly mystical East, an esoteric variant of orientalist discourse in the colonial era.[21]

A further distinguishing mark of occult movements in Imperial Germany, along with their ideological flexibility, was their notably transnational background. The Theosophical Society was founded in New York in 1875 and moved its headquarters to India in 1879. Its first branch in Germany was established in 1884. Blavatsky (born Helena von Hahn) was of German-Russian origin, and her teachings found fertile ground in Germany. Key personalities in German theosophy, such as Franz Hartmann, spent long periods living abroad, in India, the United States, and elsewhere. Hartmann's theosophical colleague and competitor Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden (1846–1916) lived in Africa for several years. In Germany as in other lands, organizational schisms were endemic to theosophy, and the peripatetic membership was soon scattered across multiple mutually hostile groups.[22]

The development of the Mazdaznan movement followed a comparable course. Founded by a German emigrant in the United States around the turn of the century, its first publication appeared in Chicago in 1902. Mazdaznan's founder, Otto Hanisch, claimed to have been born in Persia. His principal disciple was David Ammann (1855–1923), Swiss but born in India to a missionary family. Ammann met Hanisch in California in 1904 and moved to Leipzig in 1907. The German Mazdaznan journal began publishing in 1908; by 1910 there were Mazdaznan lodges in roughly a dozen cities across Germany. After being expelled from Saxony, Ammann founded a Swiss Mazdaznan commune named "Aryana" near Zurich in 1915. The Mazdaznan movement embodied the fusion of esoteric and

life reform precepts; it was influenced by theosophy and preached a physical-spiritual regimen based on a vegetarian diet, breathing exercises, and racial hygiene.[23] Many other occult-oriented groups adopted tenets like these, facilitating innumerable ideological hybrids of esotericism with cultural dispositions common to the reform milieu in Imperial Germany.

This remarkable convergence of disparate occult ideas indicates that a reassessment of the convoluted strands of the modern German occult revival is in order, fundamentally questioning any simple or straightforward division between "mainstream" esoteric tendencies like theosophy or anthroposophy and "extreme" variants like ariosophy. The range of issues addressed in the writings of Wilhelmine occultists went well beyond standard spiritual fare to encompass the outstanding concerns of the day, from controversial social questions to matters of personal morality and behavior to current affairs and urgent subjects of public interest, including Germany's standing in the world and the causes and consequences of the First World War. Each of these themes was examined from an esoteric vantage point with a view to its larger cultural implications. Even while distancing themselves from the purportedly sterile realm of academic knowledge and materialist science and the limitations of merely this-worldly information and experience, occultists were often university trained men of the world, cosmopolitan and well traveled, fully engaged with the breadth of German social life and public affairs. Claiming the mantle of science for their own worldviews, they moved readily between esoteric and exoteric spheres, between strikingly different modes of understanding, evaluation, and discourse.

Occultism as Alternative Modernity

In the new intellectual landscape of Imperial Germany, surrounded by technical progress, scientific achievement, and an increasingly prominent national role on the European and global stage, esoteric inclinations could seem not so much an aberration as an extension of the rapidly unfolding process of modernity. A recent influential interpretation maintains that since modern German occultism sought to transcend the divide between science and religion and reclaim scientific methods within an esoteric framework, occult worldviews and practices should be seen as a genuine form of scientific investigation which was "joined to the liberal vision of a society slowly evolving toward a more enlightened future."[24]

There were undoubtedly many liberal, cosmopolitan, and progressive aspects to Wilhelmine occultism, and esoteric practitioners did indeed view their activities as an innovative type of science. But this perspective neglects the equally important strains of occultism which displayed extensive overlap not with scientific and liberal endeavors but with life reform and *völkisch* tendencies, an element reflecting the

longstanding "linkage between theosophy and the volkish world view."[25] That linkage fit a larger pattern from the Bismarckian period onward, part of the "religious dimension of nationalist ideology" in Imperial Germany.[26] But it was also paradigmatic of a specifically Wilhelmine confluence of ideas: "the increasing penetration of life reform, theosophical, astrological, and *völkisch* thought within broad strata of the German bourgeoisie."[27] These life reform and *völkisch* currents were just as much a part of emerging Imperial German modernity as industrialization, parliamentary improvements, or advances in physics, and partook of the same ambivalent modernizing dynamics and their equivocal social repercussions. The notion that the modern character of esoteric thought aligns occultism with liberal, rational, and scientific trends—the supposed pillars of a modern outlook—depends on too narrow a conception of modernity and misses the crucial efforts occultists made to formulate an *alternative* model of modernity.

One paradoxical factor that richly illustrates this condition is the role of racial thinking in modern esoteric movements. Though scholars who emphasize the liberal and rational facets of occultism tend to portray esoteric racial thought as a relatively insignificant throwback that was unfairly overemphasized in earlier treatments of the subject, the racial component of esoteric worldviews represents one of their most eminently modern features. Race science was a prominent part of mainstream scientific research in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and racial assumptions suffused many liberal, evolutionary, and progressive models of society. In appropriating scientific themes and liberal motifs, occultists absorbed a variety of ideas about race and imbued them with spiritual significance. Theosophical thinkers incorporated racial categories into an overarching evolutionary paradigm uniting the spiritual and physical realms, which they cast as an alternative to the allegedly materialist science of the day. This provided the scaffolding for an esoteric scheme of spiritual evolution structured along racial lines, and anchored occult doctrines of reincarnation, of karma, of the development of the soul, of the evolution of humankind, and of the unfolding of cosmic destiny. Race became a focal point for esoteric efforts to conjoin scientific and spiritual narratives of progress and an emblem of the modern character of occult thought.[28]

For all their international and humanist leanings, German esoteric thinkers routinely coupled racial themes with national ones, a development encouraged by esoteric interactions with the *völkisch* milieu. An emphasis on *Deutschtum*, or Germanness, was a constant feature of esoteric publications. The nationalist proclivities of German occultism came to the fore with extraordinary force at the climactic end of the imperial era, with the outbreak of the First World War. The war had a powerful impact on esoteric movements: "Among German theosophists

and anthroposophists, from Hübbe-Schleiden to Steiner, Blavatsky's message of 'universal brotherhood' degenerated into a pro-war stance based on a program of cultural imperialism."[29] Racial and ethnic myopia often enough went hand in hand with an insistent individualism; appeals to individual autonomy were a centerpiece of bourgeois German culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and were particularly pronounced in the reform milieu out of which the modern occult revival emerged.

Occultists were products of their age, even as they endeavored to transcend the limitations of their contemporaries. Around the turn of the twentieth century, racial theories that seem abstruse today were often a sign of erudition and cultural advancement. But they were also contested at the time.[30] A historically empathetic approach to esoteric racial beliefs means comprehending these beliefs within their context rather than viewing them from a post-1945 standpoint regarding what is and is not acceptable in polite society. It also means recognizing that many of these beliefs were plainly racist, regardless of the lofty ideals their proponents held. Though sympathetic observers of the occult scene are reluctant to acknowledge it, this is an aspect of esoteric thought that has not simply disappeared in the twenty-first century, in Germany or elsewhere.[31]

Challenges like these have always made responsible scholarship on modern occultism a vexed undertaking. The nuances and complexities of the topic, and the contradictions built into its history, can be difficult to elucidate—all the more so when the subject continues to exert a special fascination on conspiracy theory enthusiasts and on those who suspect that shadowy occult forces are surreptitiously shaping the course of history behind a veil that historians are powerless to penetrate. This ambiguous situation warrants particular caution in dealing with "the grey area of publications half way between occultism and scholarly research."[32] It also suggests that a calm and historically informed response is in order when alarmed reports warn against occult pseudosciences infiltrating the universities.[33] An appropriately empathetic approach to the subjects of our study requires attention to both occultists and their critics; early critiques of esoteric thought contained significant insights and merit further historical consideration.[34]

Was there an esoteric enlightenment in fin-de-siècle Germany? Occult tendencies deemed themselves alternatives to mainstream science, to established religion, to conventional forms of rationality, and to the societal status quo; their esoteric aspirations expressed new aims and interests for members of a rising educated middle class in a context of social uncertainty, political stagnation, and cultural volatility. They augured a new personal enlightenment, one partly in tension with and partly an expansion upon the principles of the Age of Enlightenment. For German studies scholars, for cultural historians, for historians of religion and others,

research on the conflicted record of occult ventures in Imperial Germany can be an opportunity for rethinking some of the established assumptions about modernity and its others, about science and its rivals, and about seemingly quixotic attempts to transcend the permeable boundaries of science, religion, and reason.

"Occult Roots" in the German Empire? Esotericism and the Emergence of National Socialism

If esoteric efforts ended up entangled in racial and national myths, this was by no means exceptional in the context of the imperial epoch. Yet critical scrutiny of this entanglement is essential to making sense of the subsequent development of occult ideas and activities in the Weimar and Nazi periods. The winds of historical change blowing across interwar Germany did not leave occultists untouched; the alternative enlightenment heralded by a spiritual avant-garde was buffeted by forces beyond its ken and diverted in unforeseen directions. Because of these fluctuating circumstances, and because general debates on the origins of National Socialism remain unresolved, the putative role of esoteric movements in the rise of Nazism is the subject of ongoing controversy. Did Wilhelmine forms of esotericism prefigure aspects of the Third Reich? Is it possible to trace "occult roots of Nazism" back to the German Empire? There is no shortage of popular accounts eager to attribute Nazism's unique malevolence to occult powers. Scholarly treatments have been more tentative.[35]

The search for an ideological lineage of early National Socialism within the occult milieu of the imperial era faces considerable hurdles. There are two fundamental reasons for skepticism. One is that Nazism arose from a tangled combination of sources which converged after the collapse of the Kaiser's empire in 1918; positing longer-term "roots" of the Nazi worldview is a precarious task even when arcane esoteric tenets are not at stake. The other reason stems from the deeply contradictory heritage of the modern occult revival itself, which carried the potential to develop in many different directions and cannot be reduced to a precursor of Hitler. Above all, the world of the German Empire was qualitatively different from the Germany of the 1920s and 1930s; it was a society marked by *Bürgerstolz* and *Weltmachtstreben* (bourgeois confidence and aspirations for great power status), separated from the confusion and resentments of the following decades by the gulf of the First World War.[36]

Studies of the racial politics of German occultism have nonetheless offered suggestive insights into antecedents that may have shaped Nazi thinking. There is some substance to the possibility that leading Nazis drew inspiration from esoteric racial theories, though many of these

arguments are based on general conceptual parallels rather than demonstrable or direct influence.[37] A more promising historical approach could lie in a sustained effort to understand how participants in the occult milieu responded to their shifting social context. By combining close attention to the specific contours of esoteric racial teachings with empirical research on the actual activities occultists engaged in, the desultory path German esotericism took from the *Kaiserreich* to the Third Reich can be made somewhat clearer.[38] In such an analysis, both esotericists and early Nazis appear as seekers navigating a shared ideological terrain.

A final problem with narratives of continuity between Wilhelmine occultism and the advent of the Nazi regime centers on the heterogeneous character of esoteric movements and their interaction with life reform and *völkisch* groups. The tensions in turn of the century alternative quarters were often acute, and occult aficionados were not always welcome.[39] In the wake of the world war, Hitler and other figures on the right expressed harsh disapproval of esoteric fantasies even as their opponents on the left registered principled objections to occult worldviews and their potential manipulation for authoritarian ends. Esoteric believers themselves frequently adopted a disdainful attitude toward political involvement and cultivated an aloof detachment from the mundane details of democracy and its discontents. This stance left them paradoxically susceptible to *völkisch* appropriation, but at the same time complicated any linear trajectory from their nebulous Aryan myths to the ruthless rule of the Nazi state.

Dedicated as they were to a new model of *Bildung* and an alternative enlightenment, esoteric advocates consistently blurred the line between fact and fiction, making it harder to discern the changing political realities around them.[40] The resourcefulness and ingenuity that enabled them to fathom the eternal secrets of the soul failed them when it came to divining the signs of the times. By 1931 veteran theosophist Hugo Vollrath joined the Nazi Party and then went on to join the SS; in 1936 he proposed the creation of a "faculty for theosophy" within the Nazi cultural apparatus.[41] But Hitler's functionaries had other plans. The Gestapo put Vollrath under surveillance in 1934 and outlawed his Leipzig Theosophical Society in 1937. Esoteric dreams of a new age dawning under the auspices of the Third Reich came to naught.

It would be a mistake to see this outcome as a foregone conclusion; occultists were not destined to fall prey to Nazi illusions. Esoteric adherents made active and deliberate choices according to their own perception of the possibilities they confronted. Rather than reading history backward from the vantage point of 1933, we would do well to give full due to the contingencies and incertitudes of the past. Like any other historical phenomenon, esotericism in Imperial Germany deserves attention in its own right, not merely as a harbinger of things to come. In their battle against materialism and for an esoteric enlightenment, occultists sought to forge

alternatives to their present and prepare the way for a different future. That they ultimately failed is testimony not to their hopelessly unmodern foundation but to the ineluctable dilemmas of modernity itself.

Notes

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[1] Jennifer Walters, "Magical Revival: Occultism and the Culture of Regeneration in Britain, c. 1880–1929" (PhD diss., University of Stirling, 2007), 15.

[2] Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 15.

[3] Bradford Verter, "Dark Star Rising: The Emergence of Modern Occultism, 1800–1950" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1998), 30.

[4] Michael Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 4.

[5] Corinna Treitel, "What the Occult Reveals," *Modern Intellectual History* 6 (2009): 612. Although recent historical analyses have called for a clearer distinction between the "occult" and the "esoteric," the two terms were often used interchangeably in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German contexts. In the words of theosophist Ludwig Deinhard (1847–1918), a follower of Rudolf Steiner, "Okkultismus bedeutet Geheimwissenschaft oder Esoterik." Ludwig Deinhard, *Das Mysterium des Menschen* (Berlin: Reichl, 1910), 105.

[6] Wouter Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 86.

[7] See, for example, Ferdinand von Paungarten, *Werdende Wissenschaft: Eine kritische Einführung in esoterische Forschung* (Leipzig: Max Altmann, 1913), as well as the review of Paungarten's pamphlet in *Psychische Studien*, May 1913, 310–11.

[8] Wouter Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 406.

[9] James Retallack, ed., *Imperial Germany 1871–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 269. This development highlights "a different vision of secularization, one that focuses less on the disappearance of religion than on its transformation and reconstruction" (Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005], xi). For more on the German context see Ulrich Linse, "'Säkularisierung' oder 'Neue Religiosität'? Zur religiösen Situation in Deutschland um 1900," *Recherches Germaniques* 27 (1997): 117–41, and Todd Weir, "Secularism in Wilhelmine Germany," in *Secularism and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 253–68. As Weir notes, "There are numerous examples in the history of secularism that demonstrate that the simultaneous pursuits of esoteric spiritualism, racial religion and positivist science were not incompatible" (259).

[10] George Williamson, "The Lost Worlds of German Orientalism," *Modern Intellectual History* 9 (2012): 709.

[11] Olav Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 10; cf. Tessel Bauduin, "Science, Occultism, and the Art of the Avant-Garde in the Early Twentieth Century," *Journal of Religion in Europe* 5 (2012): 23–55, and Egil Asprem, *The Problem of Disenchantment: Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse, 1900–1939* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

[12] Wouter Hanegraaff, "Occult / Occultism," in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter Hanegraaff (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 887.

[13] Janos Frecot, "Die Lebensreformbewegung," in *Das wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum: Zur Sozialgeschichte seiner Ideen*, ed. Klaus Vondung (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 138–52; Uwe Puschner, "Lebensreform und völkische Weltanschauung," in *Die Lebensreform: Entwürfe zur Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst um 1900*, ed. Kai Buchholz (Darmstadt: Häusser, 2001), 175–78; Matthew Jefferies, *Imperial Culture in Germany, 1871–1918* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 191–223; Bernadett Bigalke, "Frischobst und Okkultismus als Heilswege: Konversionen im alternativkulturellen Milieu Leipzigs um 1900," *Medizin, Gesellschaft und Geschichte* 27 (2008): 205–46; Marc Cluet and Catherine Repussard, eds., *"Lebensreform": Die soziale Dynamik der politischen Ohnmacht* (Tübingen: Francke, 2013).

[14] Karl Heise, *Vom Pfad zum unermesslichen Lichte* (Lorch: Rohm, 1909); Heise, "Vom Planeten Mars und der modernen Spekulation über seine vermuteten Bewohner," *Prana* 3 (1912): 420–25; Heise, "Das 'Rheingold' von Richard Wagner," *Theosophische Kultur* 12 (1920): 301–12; Heise, "Ein Wort zum Kapitel der früheren Erdenleben," *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* (March 1922): 399–410. I was unable to obtain a copy of Max Rechsteiner, "Zum Gedenken an Karl Heise," *Mitteilungen der Anthroposophischen Vereinigung in der Schweiz* 81 (1986): 34–36. For further information on Heise and his sometime protégé Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch, see Peter Staudenmaier, "Nazi Perceptions of Esotericism: The Occult as Fascination and Menace," in *The Threat and Allure of the Magical*, ed. Ashwin Manthripragada (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 24–58.

[15] Uwe Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich: Sprache, Rasse, Religion* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001), 55. In the ariosophist journal *Ostara*, Grävell endorsed "a thoroughly theosophical conception of race and a programme for the restoration of Aryan authority in the world. His quoted occult sources were texts by Annie Besant, Blavatsky's successor as leader of the international Theosophical Society at London, and Rudolf Steiner, the Secretary General of its German branch in Berlin." Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: The Ariosophists of Austria and Germany 1890–1935* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 101. See Harald Grävell, "Der arische Gedanke," *Bayreuther Blätter* 25 (1902): 235–50; Grävell, *Völkische Richtlinien für unsere Zukunft* (Rodaun: Ostara, 1906); Grävell, "Das Ariertum und seine Feinde," *Ostara* 25 (1908): 3–16; Grävell, *Die arische Bewegung, eine ethische Bewegung* (Leipzig: Theosophisches Verlagshaus, 1909).

[16] Max Seiling, *Goethe und der Materialismus* (Leipzig: Mutze, 1901); Seiling, *Was soll ich? Weise Lebensregeln und Gesundheitsregeln* (Leipzig: Baumann, 1908); Seiling, *Das Professorentum, der Stolz der Nation?* (Leipzig: Mutze, 1908); Seiling, "Richard Wagner und die Theosophie," *Bayreuther Blätter* 34 (1911), 41–49. Seiling's book *Theosophie und Christentum* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Theosophischer Verlag, 1910) includes an enthusiastic afterword by Rudolf Steiner and excerpts from Guido List's foundational ariosophist work *Die Religion der Ario-Germanen*, while Seiling, *Richard Wagner, der Künstler und Mensch, der Denker und Kulturträger* (Munich: Kuhn, 1911) praises both Steiner and List. Seiling, *Goethe als Okkultist* (Berlin: Baum, 1919) appeared after his break with Steiner. For biographical background see Sandra Franz, *Die Religion des Grals: Entwürfe arteigener Religiosität im Spektrum von völkischer Bewegung, Lebensform, Okkultismus, Neuheidentum und Jugendbewegung* (Schwalbach: Wochenschau, 2009), 299–307. Comparable examples include *völkisch* author Friedrich Lienhard, a theosophist and anthroposophist and a sympathizer of ariosophy; theosophical leader Franz Hartmann, a supporter of Guido List; and Hartmann's follower Heinrich Kipp, who published under the name Karl Heinz: see Karl Heinz, *Von Häckel zur Theosophie* (Leipzig: Grunow, 1913), and Heinz, *Goethes Faust als Weltanschauung und Geheimlehre* (Leipzig: Theosophisches Verlagshaus, 1921). Kipp's works took an ecumenical attitude toward the various theosophical factions, recommending them all, along with groups like Mazdaznan and the *Gralsorden*; he cited Hartmann, Blavatsky, Besant, Sinnett, Steiner, Shou, and others with equal authority. This kind of crossover continued in the Weimar period; the journal *Ariosophie* recommended theosophical and Mazdaznan texts in the 1920s and 1930s.

[17] Photographic reproduction in Volker Lechler, *Heinrich Tränker als Theosoph, Rosenkreuzer und Pansoph* (Stuttgart: Lechler, 2013), 78.

[18] Ernst Tiede, *Ur-Arische Gotteserkenntnis* (Berlin: Barsdorf, 1920); Tiede, *Astrologisches Lexikon* (Leipzig: Theosophisches Verlagshaus, 1922). Ariosophist publications frequently promoted astrological literature; see, for example, Johannes Balzli, *Guido von List: Der Wiederentdecker uralter arischer Weisheit—Sein Leben und sein Schaffen* (Vienna: Guido-von-List-Gesellschaft, 1917), 236. Balzli's book also advertised the venerable *Neue Metaphysische Rundschau: Die führende Zeitschrift für Okkultismus, Theosophie und Metaphysik* (New metaphysical review: the leading journal for occultism, theosophy, and metaphysics), founded in 1897.

[19] Cf. Sandra Groß, "Carl Huter: Selbsternannter Stifter einer neuen 'Weltreligion' zwischen Eugenik und Gesichtsausdruckskunde," in *Von Aposteln bis Zionisten: Religiöse Kultur im Leipzig des Kaiserreichs*, ed. Iris Edenheiser (Marburg: Diagonal, 2010), 138–47; Renko Geffarth, "Äther, Urlicht, Relativität: Weltformel und 'wahre Erkenntnis' um 1900," in *Aufklärung und Esoterik: Wege in die Moderne*, ed. Monika Neugebauer-Wölk (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 440–60; Christopher White, "Seeing Things: Science, the Fourth Dimension, and Modern Enchantment," *American Historical Review* 119 (2014): 1466–91. For occult invocations of "higher worlds," see among many others Rudolf Steiner, *Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse der höheren Welten?* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Theosophischer Verlag, 1909); Peryt Shou, *Der Verkehr mit Wesen höherer Welten* (Berlin:

Brandler-Pracht, 1914); Johann Baptist Wiedenmann, *Spiritualismus und praktischer Okkultismus* (Leipzig: Spohr, 1914).

[20] An overview of the publishing landscape can be found in Heinz Mürmel and Iris Edenheiser, "Geheime Kräfte, wahrsagende Medien und feinstoffliche Astralkörper: Das okkulte Leipzig," in *Von Aposteln bis Zionisten*, ed. Iris Edenheiser, 195–204.

[21] Cf. Karl Baier, "Zum Yoga im Okkultismus und Esoterik," in *Yoga auf dem Weg nach Westen* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1998), 117–43; Erik Hornung, "Theosophy and Anthroposophy," in *The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its Impact on the West* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 141–54; Michael Bergunder, "Die Bhagavadgita im 19. Jahrhundert: Hinduismus, Esoterik und Kolonialismus," in *Westliche Formen des Hinduismus in Deutschland*, ed. Michael Bergunder (Halle: Franckesche Stiftungen, 2006), 187–216; Suzanne Marchand, "Eastern Wisdom in an Era of Western Despair: Orientalism in 1920s Central Europe," in *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, ed. Peter Gordon and John McCormick (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 341–60.

[22] Olav Hammer, "Schism and Consolidation: The Case of the Theosophical Movement," in *Sacred Schisms: How Religions Divide*, ed. James Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 196–217; Helmut Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland: Theosophische Weltanschauung und gesellschaftliche Praxis 1884–1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

[23] Michael Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras: Geschichte, Gegenwart, Rituale* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002), 378–400; Ulrich Linse, "Mazdaznan: Die Rassenreligion vom arischen Friedensreich," in *Völkische Religion und Krisen der Moderne: Entwürfe "arteigener" Glaubenssysteme seit der Jahrhundertwende*, ed. Stefanie von Schnurbein (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001), 268–91; Johannes Graul, "Die Mazdaznan-Bewegung im Deutschen Kaiserreich: Eine archivalienbasierte Spurensuche," *Religion-Staat-Gesellschaft: Zeitschrift für Glaubensformen und Weltanschauungen* 12 (2011): 369–86.

[24] Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 190.

[25] George Mosse, "The Mystical Origins of National Socialism," in *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (New York: Fertig, 1980), 204. Mosse attributed the spread of *völkisch* views in part to the appeal of the occult: "What made such ideas attractive and plausible, however, was the popularity of occultist beliefs. The irrationality of these cults, as well as the anti-rationalistic romanticism then in vogue, made an astonishing number of men receptive to equally, and at times more, outlandish theories of national heritage, race, and religion. Occultism, in fact, became essential to another aspect of Volkish thought. For some thinkers it provided a link between the past and the present; it was a bridge that spanned a thousand years of neglect. The past, which Christianity had done its best to destroy, could be recovered and applied to the present needs of the Volk through occultism. Occultism was the chalice that quenched their thirst, and at the same time made irrelevant anything that historical scholarship might do to show events in an entirely different light." George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), 72–73.

[26] Peter Walkenhorst, "Nationalismus als 'politische Religion'? Zur religiösen Dimension nationalistischer Ideologie im Kaiserreich," in *Religion im Kaiserreich: Milieus—Mentalitäten—Krisen*, ed. Olaf Blaschke (Gütersloh: Kaiser, 1996), 503–29.

[27] Norbert Klatt, *Theosophie und Anthroposophie: Neue Aspekte zu ihrer Geschichte* (Göttingen: Klatt, 1993), 9.

[28] Helmut Zander, "Sozialdarwinistische Rassentheorien aus dem okkulten Untergrund des Kaiserreichs," in *Handbuch zur 'Völkischen Bewegung' 1871–1918*, ed. Uwe Puschner, Walter Schmitz, and Justus Ulbricht (Munich: Saur, 1996), 224–51; Julia Iwersen, "Rassismus und Antisemitismus in der Esoterik," in *Wege der Esoterik: Ideen und Ziele* (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 205–13; Ansgar Martins, *Rassismus und Geschichtsmetaphysik: Esoterischer Darwinismus und Freiheitsphilosophie bei Rudolf Steiner* (Frankfurt: Info3, 2012).

[29] Ulrich Linse, "Libertäre und theosophische Strömungen," in *Handbuch Fin de Siècle*, ed. Sabine Haupt (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2008), *232*. Cf. Karl Heise, "Der Krieg und seine Folgen," *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* (November 1914): 213–16; Karl Heinz, *Der Krieg im Lichte der okkulten Lehren: Ein Wort an die weiße Rasse* (Breslau: Faßhauer, 1915); Rudolf Steiner, *Gedanken während der Zeit des Krieges* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1915); Friedrich Lienhard, *Deutschlands europäische Sendung* (Stuttgart: Greiner & Pfeiffer, 1915); Harald Grävell, "Deutsche Kultur und französische Zivilisation im Kampf," *Theosophie* 5 (1915): 377–93; Karl Heise, "Kriegs-Visionen," *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* (August 1917): 72–76.

[30] Early critiques of racial thought include Friedrich Hertz, *Moderne Rassentheorien: Kritische Essays* (Vienna: Stern, 1904); Jean Finot, *Race Prejudice* (London: Constable, 1906); W. J. Roberts, "The Racial Interpretation of History and Politics," *International Journal of Ethics* 18 (1908): 475–92; Franz Boas, *Kultur und Rasse* (Leipzig: Veit, 1914); Max Dessoir, "Rassenmystik," in *Vom Jenseits der Seele: Die Geheimwissenschaften in kritischer Betrachtung* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1917), 235–40.

[31] Holdger Platta, "Abgründe im New Age: Rechtsextremistische Denkstrukturen in der zeitgenössischen Esoterikbewegung," *Vorgänge: Zeitschrift für Bürgerrechte und Gesellschaftspolitik* 36 (1997): 44–55; Friedrich Heller and Anton Maegerle, *Die Sprache des Hasses: Rechtsextremismus und völkische Esoterik* (Stuttgart: Schmetterling, 2001); Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Amy Hale, "John Michell, Radical Traditionalism, and the Emerging Politics of the Pagan New Right," *Pomegranate* 13 (2011): 77–97; Jacob Senholt, "Radical Politics and Political Esotericism: The Adaptation of Esoteric Discourse within the Radical Right," in *Contemporary Esotericism*, ed. Egil Asprem and Kennet Granholm (Sheffield: Equinox, 2013): 244–64.

[32] Wouter Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 238. Some of the best recent studies point toward important revisions of existing interpretive models. In addition to the works by Bernadett Bigalke, Johannes Graul, Julian Strube, and Egil Asprem cited here, see Uwe Puschner and Clemens Vollnhals, eds., *Die*

völkisch-religiöse Bewegung im Nationalsozialismus: Eine Beziehungs- und Konfliktgeschichte (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012).

[33] See, for example, Bernd Kramer, "Der akademische Geist: Esoteriker unterwandern die deutschen Hochschulen," *Die Zeit*, May 31, 2011.

[34] Examples include the work of Hans Freimark (1881–1945), a prominent critical observer of the Wilhelmine esoteric milieu with occult interests of his own; see Freimark, *Die okkultistische Bewegung: Eine Aufklärungsschrift* (Leipzig: Heims, 1912), and Freimark, *Geheimlehre und Geheimwissenschaft* (Leipzig: Heims, 1913). Incorporating sources like these in an assessment of modern occultism can help offset the tendency toward apologia, which formed a conspicuous part of earlier works on the subject. In the words of Wouter Hanegraaff: "It is high time for scholars to drop the apologetic agenda and acknowledge that esoteric worldviews are products of historical circumstance and human invention just like anything else in the field of religion and philosophy." Wouter Hanegraaff, "Textbooks and Introductions to Western Esotericism," *Religion* 43 (2013): 193.

[35] For recent divergent interpretations compare Julian Strube, "Die Erfindung des esoterischen Nationalsozialismus im Zeichen der Schwarzen Sonne," *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 20 (2012): 223–68; Eric Kurlander, "Hitler's Monsters: The Occult Roots of Nazism and the Emergence of the Nazi 'Supernatural Imaginary,'" *German History* 30 (2012): 528–49; Jost Hermand, "Vom Werfenstein zur Wewelsburg: Die sogenannten arioheroischen Geheimbünde," in *Deutsche Geheimgesellschaften: Von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Jost Hermand and Sabine Mödersheim (Cologne: Böhlau, 2013), 141–61; Horst Junginger, "Nordic Ideology in the SS and the SS Ahnenerbe," in *Nordic Ideology between Religion and Scholarship*, ed. Horst Junginger and Andreas Åkerlund (Frankfurt: Lang, 2013), 39–69.

[36] See Wolfgang Mommsen, *Bürgerstolz und Weltmachtstreben: Deutschland unter Wilhelm II., 1890 bis 1918* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1995). For a range of recent reconsiderations of the era cf. Sven Oliver Müller and Cornelius Torp, eds., *Imperial Germany Revisited: Continuing Debates and New Perspectives* (New York: Berghahn, 2011).

[37] Jeffrey Goldstein, "On Racism and Anti-Semitism in Occultism and Nazism," *Yad Vashem Studies* 13 (1979): 53–72; Jackson Spielvogel and David Redles, "Hitler's Racial Ideology: Content and Occult Sources," *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 3 (1986): 227–46; Harald Strohm, *Die Gnosis und der Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997); Klaus Vondung, *Deutsche Wege zur Erlösung: Formen des Religiösen im Nationalsozialismus* (Paderborn: Fink, 2013), 51–62. A broader historical horizon is surveyed in Monika Neugebauer-Wölk, "Esoterik und Neuzeit: Überlegungen zur historischen Tiefenstruktur religiösen Denkens im Nationalsozialismus," *Zeitenblicke* 5 (2006): 1–28.

[38] For a case study along these lines see Peter Staudenmaier, *Between Occultism and Nazism: Anthroposophy and the Politics of Race in the Fascist Era* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

[39] German-Jewish anarchist Erich Mühsam complained in 1905 about the influx of "spiritistischen, theosophischen, okkultistischen" apostles at the Monte Verità retreat near the Swiss town of Ascona, a center of utopian aspirations and

countercultural experiments; cf. Ulrike Voswinckel, *Freie Liebe und Anarchie. Schwabing—Monte Verità: Entwürfe gegen das etablierte Leben* (Munich: Allitera, 2009), 25. For a representative critique from the Weimar left see Kurt Tucholsky's derisive portrait of Steiner: Ignaz Wrobel, "Rudolf Steiner in Paris," *Die Weltbühne*, July 3, 1924, 26. From a historical perspective, this dynamic is not inevitable; as Matthew Beaumont notes, "The occult can be shaped by the hope of active social transformation as well as the despondent dream of passively escaping society altogether." Matthew Beaumont, "Socialism and Occultism at the *Fin de Siècle*: Elective Affinities," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and the Occult,* ed. Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 180.

[40] On the importance of literary sources in constructing German esoteric traditions see Julian Strube, *Vril: Eine okkulte Urkraft in Theosophie und esoterischem Neonazismus* (Munich: Fink, 2013), and Theodore Ziolkowski, *Lure of the Arcane: The Literature of Cult and Conspiracy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013). These studies are a reminder of the need for interdisciplinary approaches to understanding esotericism, with compelling reasons to draw on literary analysis in addition to the usual tools of historical research.

[41] Hugo Vollrath to Reinhard Heydrich, April 3, 1936, on letterhead of the Theosophische Gesellschaft Leipzig, proposing the establishment of a "Fachschaft für Theosophie, Mystik und verwandte Gebiete" within the *Reichskulturkammer* (Bundesarchiv Berlin, R58/6199/2:476–87). For Vollrath's party membership see his March 19, 1936, statement to the Leipzig police in the same file. Vollrath (1877–1943), a protégé of Franz Hartmann and a prominent figure in German astrological circles, founded the Theosophical Publishing House in Leipzig in 1907, which published *Prana* and journals such as *Gesundes Leben* alongside *Theosophie* and the *Theosophische Rundschau*.

2: An Elite Class of Thinkers: Monism between Science and the Spiritual in Wilhelmine Germany

Perry Myers

During the second half of the nineteenth century, empirical science had gradually become the predominant paradigm for assessing and determining knowledge about the human being. Yet such "materialistic" models of knowledge production seemed for many thinkers of the era to deplete human subjectivity and spirituality of its capacity for shaping human meaning and identity. Importantly, this empirical—purportedly "objective"—view of the human being emerged concurrently with debates about Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), whose theories of natural selection and evolution served as the critical harbinger for this dispute.[1] As a result, many thinkers grappled with the apparent mutual exclusivity of scientific knowledge about the human being and human spirituality. Specifically, many intellectuals of the era, including such prominent scientists as Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919; zoologist and Darwinist) and Wilhelm Ostwald (1853–1932; chemist and Nobel Prize winner [1909]), wrestled with the purported contradiction between an empirical (material) understanding of human life and a spiritual one.[2] In fact, they sought to resolve this perceived crisis of identity (triggered by the conflict between material and spiritual worldviews) by asserting a scientifically defendable model of human life that incorporated rather than excluded spirituality—a model that Todd Weir has termed a "fourth confession."[3]

In the case of Wilhelm Ostwald, for instance, Caspar Hakfoort identifies three aims of his spiritually grounded scientific philosophy: "striving towards a unified science of nature; its use as the basis for an all-embracing philosophy; and the effort to realize this philosophy in practice, as a secular religion to replace Christianity."[4] These traits are also generally applicable to many of the era's secular movements and their acolytes who attempted to reestablish commonalities between new science and spiritual identity. Moreover, open hostility to Christianity as a failed source for renewing human spirituality pervaded their publications and speeches, but tended to be denomination specific. Most of these innovative scientific-religious thinkers came from a Protestant heritage, including Haeckel

and Ostwald. Unsurprisingly, these recurrent attacks were levied against the Catholic Church and what Ernst Haeckel deemed in his monist treatise and bestseller *Die Welträtsel* (World riddle, 1899; in English as *The Riddle of the Universe*, 1900), its "ultramontanen Geistesthyrannei" (ultramontane spiritual tyranny).[5]

Despite their sharp criticism directed at the Catholic Church, they regarded Protestantism as equally incapable of providing the conceptual guidance to surmount the growing scientific-spiritual conflict at hand. Thus in response, these intellectuals served up a sort of scientific-religious recipe to reassert a congruity between science and spirituality that took on more definitive projections in various pseudoreligious movements of the era. Madame Blavatsky, for instance, borrowed and repackaged Indian religious traditions to found theosophy in New York in 1879, which became established in Germany under the leadership of Franz Hartmann and Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden during the 1890s;[6] Ernst Haeckel's monism emerged around the turn of the century and became established as a serious cultural phenomenon during the first decades of the twentieth century.

As I have argued elsewhere, these pseudo-scientific and religious concoctions frequently borrowed much of their thought from Indian religions and traditions to formulate their worldviews. Yet there are many potential angles for inspecting these movements, assessing the thought of these innovative spiritual *Wissenschaftler* and measuring the impact that they had on society, culture, and politics during the era. In this chapter, I want to focus on one particular aspect that threads its way through much of their esoteric writings, namely how Haeckel's and Ostwald's monist ideas assert an innovative scientific-spiritual approach in response to the sensed crisis in self-perception and identity "as the [human] machine was expanding and sharpening its meanings and embedded agendas."[7] In response to such "mechanistic" views of the human being, these monist thinkers project a scientific religion that promised to "deliver religious goods without appealing to the supernatural."[8] More specifically, they intended to circumvent and replace traditional Christianity to redound to a special elite class of thinkers and reestablish the *Wissenschaftler* as the exclusive medium to bolster the cultural progress of the nation—a model that would prove conducive to more extreme forms of national renewal that culminated in the horrors of 1933.

Haeckel and Ostwald were by no means the only scientists to pursue this monistic synthesis or other pseudoreligious agendas. Because a broader study of monism and other fringe religions would require more space than available here, I will focus on these two exemplary thinkers: the zoologist, Darwinist, and founder of monism, Ernst Haeckel, paying particular attention to his monist magnum opus, *Die Welträtsel*; and the chemist, Nobel laureate, and President of the German Monist Society (*Monistenbund*) from 1911 to 1915, Wilhelm Ostwald. I will show how

their monist thought attempts to reconstitute an intellectual exclusivity for those with access to the special scientific-religious knowledge that monism purportedly embodied.[9] To put it differently, these intellectuals reasserted an elite class of thinkers through their scientific (*wissenschaftliche*) weltanschauung and its crusade in praxis—monism—which they sought to invoke as the engine for what these thinkers defined as national progress.

Monist Ethics

Monist thought of the era as formulated by Haeckel and Ostwald was grounded in the purported transformations in ethical standards and behavior that the reunification of science and spirituality would generate. Haeckel's "monist ethics" (*monistische Sittenlehre*), for instance, is premised on the assertion that "*there are not two distinct, separate worlds*: a *physical, material* and a *moral, immaterial world*."[10] That is, the specifications for living an ethical life can be determined only through the monist fusion of the material and spiritual domains, as Haeckel explains:

> Practical life imposes a series of very specific moral demands that can only be fulfilled correctly and according to nature when they stand in pure harmony with a reasonable worldview. As a result of this principle of our monist philosophy our comprehensive *moral teaching* or ethic must rationally coalesce with the unified notion of the "cosmos," which we have gained through our advanced recognition of the natural laws.[11]

Establishing accordance with natural law and scientifically grounded reason—a scientific task reserved for those with special insight and training, as we shall see—generates the basis of monism and in turn ascribes the determinants of community consensus—the norms of ethical behavior.

Haeckel then turns to a more precise description of the monist model of ethics (*Sittenlehre*). Here he first bemoans Kant's dualistic explanation of the world—noumena and phenomena—which, according to Haeckel, has "caused infinite damage and continues today to have a powerful effect."[12] Kant's model, in Haeckel's assessment, only perpetuates the dualistic model upon which Christianity is based and thus consequentially precludes science from generating a coherent worldview, in which the physical and spiritual domains would harmoniously coalesce. In response to this philosophical flaw, Haeckel, in a significant leap from philosophical musing to his monist model of ethics, asserts that the monist worldview awards equal weight to what he terms Egoism (*Egoismus*) and Altruism (*Altruismus*), which affords a valuable balance between individual desire

and community benefit.[13] Moreover, in a sweeping rebuke that clearly echoes Nietzsche, Haeckel contends that Christian tenets disesteem the individual, the human body, nature, culture, women, and family, primarily because of its insistence on the attainment of happiness only in a "better afterworld [*besseren Jenseits*]."[14] From this viewpoint, Christianity's focus on heavenly reward therefore requires humanity "to forgo all bliss in this world and to hold all necessary *earthly goods* in low esteem."[15] In contradistinction to Christianity then, monist ethics emphasize standards of behavior that result in rewards in this world (*diesseits*) and form a pillar of community consensus. Such Nietzschean undertones also resound in Ostwald's depiction of monist ethics.

In the second volume of Ostwald's *Monistische Sonntagspredigten* (Monist Sunday sermons), for instance, the Nobel laureate also contextualizes monism in terms of its ethical impact. The primary goal of monism, according to Ostwald, is the "design of a new ethic that is appropriate for the modern human being and illustrates clearly the de facto existent practical ethic that despite multiple shortcomings and deficiencies definitively fulfills and commands our lives."[16] Similar to Haeckel, Ostwald also frames his monist ethics with Nietzschean undertones and in unwavering confrontation with traditional Christian religious tenets and praxis. Specifically, Ostwald points out that religions to date have depended on revelation (*Offenbarung*) and depict the human being as blemished—a sinner in Christian parlance—that required the intervention of a priesthood, but monist ethics, as Ostwald continues, are "absolutely an ethic from and for this world . . . nothing other than the doctrine of reciprocal behavior of human beings in human society, in other words that the ethic must be and can be nothing else other than implemented sociology."[17] Thus Ostwald, like Haeckel, envisions monism as a generator of immediate social benefits in this world—the primary source for establishing community consensus—and rejects any delayed rewards in an afterlife (*jenseits*) as these thinkers accused Christianity of endorsing.

Yet the conclusion that ethics are solely this-worldly and have no link to a future reward model of salvation in an afterworld still required the formulation of requisite social processes for determining moral parameters—a community consensus that derives and enforces ethical standards. Ostwald describes this communal process in terms of cultural progress, which he explicitly links with science:

> But now we again owe to science the fundamental recognition of the development of the human species, of his advance to ever higher ethical sensibilities and thought. We must generally conclude and see it confirmed in every individual case that *every religion, the older it is, the more it stands in opposition to the thought and sensibilities of the present time*.[18]

Here Ostwald applauds science for its recognition and acknowledgment of human ethical progress, though he cites no concrete examples. Moreover, he depicts the gradual deterioration of traditional religions' compatibility with modern cultural sensitivities. Yet importantly, Ostwald explicitly attributes the greater communal impact of ethical progress to a monist worldview—the generation of auspicious outcomes in the social realm: "Thus only the monist idea has the capability to accommodate not only the needs of the individual, but at the same time those of the collective and *only the monist idea has therefore the entitlement to be promoted by the collective*."[19] Ostwald's depiction of such propitious monist social repercussions not only signals meaning for the individual but also portends larger scale implications for improving society more generally. Yet to this point we have not addressed how these monist leaders derived their monist model or explained how it would reconstitute the unity of science and spirituality—how the relinking or reunification of science and religion can bring about this ethical revolution for modern society and culture. Here the special talents and knowledge of the scientist are called for.

"Wissenschaftliche Weltanschauung aber ist monistische Weltanschauung"

Such thinkers as Haeckel and Ostwald exhibited little reluctance in expressing their monist ideas about the source for generating effective modern ethics and reunifying the material and spiritual spheres: science. In no uncertain terms Ostwald equates a scientific worldview with a monist one as his own words in this section's title indicate.[20] That said, Haeckel and Ostwald elucidated monism as scientific practice that implicitly supplants traditional Christianity, as Haeckel explains in *Die Welträtsel*:

> In order to promote these lofty goals it seems highly important that modern natural sciences do not just demolish the phantoms of superstition and sweep away their ugly rubble, but rather that it also constructs a new livable building on the now free building site for the human spirit; a *Palace of Reason*, in which we devoutly honor the true "Holy Trinity" of the nineteenth century gained through our newly won monist worldview, the *Trinity of the True, Good and Beautiful*.[21]

Here Haeckel calls for modern science to eradicate and sweep away superstition but also elaborates the avenues to attain this tripartite worldview: truth, benevolence, and beauty. He reiterates first that the "pure truth can only be found in the temple of the perception of nature," which is

accessible only through "the empirical research of facts and according to reason based on recognition of its operative causes."[22] This is a far more revolutionary statement than it perhaps first appears to the twenty-first century reader, but in fact, from this viewpoint, truth no longer derives from the domain of biblical exegesis, nor from the intellectual deliberations of the theologian—"every composed belief that contends to perceive truth through supernatural means"—rather empirical science bears the sole burden of uncovering truth, good, and beauty in the world.[23] In an earlier essay that Haeckel originally delivered as a speech to the Naturforschenden Gesellschaft des Osterlandes (Naturalist society of eastland) and later published as *Der Monismus als Band zwischen Religion und Wissenschaft* (Monism as link between religion and science), he proclaims this more explicitly: "Everywhere the God-Nature opens up to us an inexhaustible source of aesthetic pleasures."[24] Science reveals the divine and its aesthetic gratification in nature (*Gott-Natur*).

Even more straightforwardly than Haeckel, Ostwald also underscores the indispensible role of science in response to that era's religious turmoil when he emphasizes science's requisite influence for establishing stable cultural cohesiveness. Once the human being has been released from bondage, religious anarchy first emerges, which for Ostwald raises the question of "how we can develop out of this into an organization. The answer to this question is to be sure the well-known one: Only the scientific worldview affords an organization, yes the organization in this sense is the essence of the scientific worldview."[25] Only the practice, tangible results, and social implementation of a scientific worldview—the ideological substance for a scientific-spiritual reunification—casts off, or more accurately, supplants the ineffective and outdated Christian tenets of original sin and the futile hope of believers in a heavenly afterlife. In fact, as Ostwald further elaborates, "The creative thoughts that directly bring us joy are now delivered to us first and foremost by science."[26] To put it more simply, for both Haeckel and Ostwald a *wissenschaftliche* and a monist weltanschauung were identical. In their view, neither difference nor contradiction exists between religion and science as long as science is pulling the strings.

Yet expressed in terms with even broader ramifications, Haeckel contends that the monist worldview, with its subsequent reunification of science and religion, will resolve the "riddle of the universe." Haeckel's aptly titled penultimate chapter to his monist treatise, "Lösung der Welträtsel," promises that resolution. Significantly, Haeckel conceptualizes the solution to this riddle in terms of scientific progress: "The number of universal riddles has decreased steadily because of the given progress of the true perception of nature during the nineteenth century. It is ultimately reduced to a single all encompassing universal mystery, the *problem of substance*."[27] Yet in somewhat

contradictory terms, Haeckel admits that despite this remarkable scientific progress the attainment of knowledge's core is no closer than at any other time in history. Borrowing Kantian terminology, he explains, "What lays behind the perceptable appearances as '*thing-in-itself*' we still do not know today."[28] Despite this purported glitch in progress, Haeckel employs the vagaries of scientific-religious thinking to assert that monism has nevertheless resolved this still concealed knowledge by transforming the *Substanzgesetz* (law of substances) into a "universal law of *development*" through which *Wissenschaftler* have convincingly proven the "universal unity of nature and the eternal validity of natural laws."[29] From the discovery and the ensuing perception of nature's unity, Haeckel contends, the monism of the cosmos emerged—an order that presupposed a unity of nature for the entire universe and became accessible only through science.

Thus Haeckel's model of the universe preempts all other competing worldviews—philosophical, theological, and confessional—and implicitly requires that the scientist and his craft are anointed as the keepers of knowledge and the purveyors of wisdom about life's essence:

> The old worldview of *ideal-dualism* with its mystical and human-centered dogmas disintegrate into rubble; but above this enormous rubble field ascends nobly and gloriously the new sun of our *Real-Monism,* which makes the wonderful temple of nature completely accessible. In the pure cult of "Truth, Good, Beauty," which constitutes the core of our *monist Religion,* we find a rich alternative to the lost human-centered ideals of "God, freedom, and immortality."[30]

Here Haeckel leaves little doubt about the cultural magnitude of monism's role in Western thought: an unassailable religious alternative to Western Christianity. Ostwald's view also concurs unambiguously with Haeckel's depiction of science as an ersatz religion: "Such is the full picture that the cultural history of humanity shows: a steadily occurring *replacement of religion through science*, when the exploration of truth is concerned."[31] In fact, more generally, according to Ostwald, all aspects of life should be understood under the purview of science: "From science we expect and require nothing less than that it subjects without exception all things that come into consideration for our lives to its authority."[32] Truth results solely from scientific practice.

Here these two influential scientists turn the tables on traditional cultural paradigms and cast science onto the pedestal of divine authority by incorporating the sphere of religion. At the first convention of the international *Monistenbund*, where Ostwald declared the coming "monist century" (*monistisches Jahrhundert*), Ostwald formulates the magnitude of science's purview in his opening speech:

> Since science is humanity's own work and we are not approaching it as an absolute authority, upon whose decision, which we can in no way predict, we must humbly wait, *rather we are approaching it through the path of honest and earnest work. And it decides in regard to our desires not arbitrarily, rather according to nature's laws, upon which our own being is founded.*[33]

Though still sown here with religious fabric, such statements manifest explicit political undertones as these thinkers formulated their ideas in increasingly sweeping language: "Science here takes again with immeasurable success the position of the deity."[34] Science in this view constitutes divinity.

Thus, by simple logic, if science replaces religion in this monist worldview—becomes inscribed with divine status—and supplies unlimited aesthetic pleasures, as Haeckel has informed us, then it must also designate the practitioner of science (the *Wissenschaftler*) as the sole locksmith for unlocking access to truth, good, and beauty. As we shall see, both Haeckel and Ostwald envision a class of science gurus—monist pundits—to replace theologians, priests, and pastors as the filter through which knowledge about the world, human identity, society, and culture can be reconstituted and governed.

An Elite Class of Thinkers

In his essay, "Wahrer und falscher Monismus," from the fourth volume of the *Sonntagspredigten*, Ostwald rejects the idea that an understanding of the world can be simply woven together from a single principle of nature; rather he emphasizes the boundless chaos that confronts the human spirit:

> We do not seek an a priori Monism, in which we assume or contend that the entire world is spun from any single principle, be it water, be it God, rather we experience the world initially as an inexhaustible multitudinous chaos, and *state afterwards in accordance with science that the energy of the human spirit succeeds level by level to bring order to this chaos or to design a cosmos out of this chaos.*[35]

Thus, as Ostwald describes, the power of human mind (cognition) assembles the universe's apparent chaos in a step-by-step process into an orderly cosmos. That is, human beings through their intellectual prowess construct a logical and orderly cosmos in strict accord with science. As a logical result of this view, only the scientifically astute, a special class of thinkers—*Wissenschaftler*—can ascertain and affirm the order of the cosmos.

Unsurprisingly, Haeckel confirms this reading. The attainment and possession of the requisite scientific aptitude and competence is reserved for a unique class of gurus and remains a rare achievement: "But of course, consistent thought remains a rare occurrence of nature!" For, as Haeckel argues, the majority of thinkers persist in their conflicting dualistic view of the universe. Only a select, elite class of thinkers proves able to surmount this dualistic fallacy and attains a monist worldview: "The number of those thinkers [was always] small that valiantly overcame this dualism and turned towards pure monism."[36] Here Haeckel describes the intellectual exclusivity reserved for monism's elite adepts.

Yet Haeckel and Ostwald explicitly recognized the need to establish more concrete outcomes—a means of verifying the exclusivity of membership in this monist club of scientifically grounded religious thinkers who hold special access to the universal secrets of scientific religion—a monist weltanschauung. Unsurprisingly, these same scientific-religious innovators envisioned Goethe as the ideal scientist, who many monists frequently referenced. In an idiosyncratic reading of Goethe's *Faust*, for instance, Bruno Wille (1868–1928), a radical intellectual and philosopher, argues that Faust embodies flawlessly their idealized monist scientist.[37] In Wille's monist reading of the tragedy, he assesses the inquisitive Faust and his pact with Mephistopheles as *Erkenntnisdrang*—a profound search for knowledge and understanding of the world, which according to Wille aligns seamlessly with a monist weltanschauung.[38] Most thinkers in the current era, according to Wille, are unlike Faust, and even most scientists are beset with flawed ideological perspectives:

> The specialized researchers of nature that I have in mind are either agnostics, that is, they refrain in principle from every philosophical and religious world interpretation, or rather they pay homage, even while they forego jounalistic formulation, to a worldview that can be designated as materialism or mechanism, but also as brutality.[39]

In Wille's view, Goethe, purportedly Germany's most prolific monist, unlike most other specialized scientists during the current era, had achieved an intellectual accord between the material and spiritual domains, evidenced by Goethe's often cited mantra that Wille paraphrases: "Material could never exist without spirit, and spirit never without material."[40]

Haeckel too reformulates Goethe's declaration as the basis for transcending what he also viewed as a fallacious dualistic worldview: "The amalgamation of apparent opposites" in the material and spiritual spheres generates "the progress to resolve the fundamental riddle of the universe." Yet most important, this unifying task remains reserved for the scientist, who attains through science's labors special access to the secrets of nature's unity. That is, the riddle of the universe

> is being advanced with every year by the constantly increasing growth in the understanding of nature. Thus we may indulge ourselves with the bright hope that the *twentieth century* will smooth out such opposites more and more and will spread the sought unity of a worldview in wide circles through the development of *pure monism.*[41]

Here the scientist's efforts undergird Haeckel's projections of monism's influence and charge to become a dominant force, what Ostwald termed the "monistisches Jahrhundert"—a proselytizing force more aligned with the conversion perquisites of the traditional Churches than one might assume—take on more concrete form.[42] Thus the monist scientist is not secluded in the laboratory but carries the responsibility of disseminating the attained scientific wisdom to the world—the guru monist scientist leading the flock.

Haeckel explains the link between scientific discovery and the essential role of the scientist in the community more explicitly. He contends that only through the "special understanding" of monism can science and religion be united. Haeckel reiterates that the "clear and coherent notion of monism in fact amalgamates both concepts of religion and science into one together." Yet critically, such exceptional insight, according to Haeckel's assessment of the past's most prolific thinkers, is rare:

> Meanwhile only a few determined thinkers struggle their way up to these high conceptions of Spinoza and Goethe; rather most of the educated of our times (without even considering the uneducated masses) remain convinced that religion represents an autonomous realm of our intellectual life, independent from science, and no less valuable and indispensible as the latter.[43]

Haeckel emphasizes that this special knowledge "resides in the heart of almost all unbiased and thinking researchers of nature, even when only few have the courage or the need to acknowledge it openly."[44] That is, the scientific guru disseminates scientific findings to the world through which human beings and their social constituencies can reforge community consensus for both the spiritual and material domains. Moreover, as a consequence of the covert nature of such scientific-spiritual unity, the assertion that science and religion reconverge becomes in essence unchallengeable and places the burden on the doubter to disprove this unified worldview—a "have your cake and eat it, too" scientific religion.

These visions of an elite class of scientific-spiritual thinkers also resound in Wilhelm Ostwald's intellectual pursuits. At the height of Ostwald's international status in 1909, when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for chemistry, he also published in that same year a book entitled *Grosse Männer* (Great men).[45] In this text, Ostwald applies his theory

of *Energetik* in an attempt to ascertain the specific causal factors and characteristics that lead certain individuals to become great thinkers and achievers.[46] His text, which devotes significant space to bemoaning the German education system—a common feature among many intellectuals of the era—provides a series of biographical essays on some of the nineteenth century's most renowned scientists, and concludes with a detailed list of features that seem to coalesce for all of these "great men."[47] Important for our purposes are less the predictive characteristics that Ostwald claims to discover but rather the motivations for his pursuit and how this underlying thread of monist pseudoreligious and scientific thought manifests itself.

In Ostwald's speech at the first meeting of the Internationale Monistenkongress (International Monist congress) in Hamburg, for example, he describes the critical role of the scientist for contributing to the larger questions that human beings pursue:

> The researcher . . . occupies himself with questions that far surpass the interest and activity of the moment. And the more important and far-reaching these questions are, the more respect we show in watching the tasks of the researcher, and the more thankful we greet the results that his work brings.[48]

Yet Ostwald conceives the position and status of the monist *Wissenschaftler* in more concrete terms. He envisions a sort of convent in which this elite class of scientists do their work for the world: "Thus so can I imagine monist colonies, which work together in specific scientific fields, where a creative and groundbreaking researcher with a corresponding disposition is motivated to settle in such a colony."[49]

Monist colonies will emerge, Ostwald suggests, led by creative and pioneering scientists, in which the powers (*Kräfte*) of the monist community can be harnessed. The scientific knowledge generated in these monist colonies becomes applicable to broader aspects of society. That is, this elite class of scientists will lead society with their "scientifically" constructed knowledge of the world. Humanity will rejoice that "its most outstanding leaders have found an attitude towards life that truly brings the individual as absolutely close as possible to the sought after condition of pure and complete bliss by social means."[50] Thus in Ostwald's vision scientific knowledge and the scientists that produce it will lead humanity (*die Menschheit*) to good fortune and happiness.

Yet Ostwald remains careful to emphasize the limited access to such community euphoria, which can be fulfilled by only a minor percentage of the populace: "On the other hand certainly not all, nor many Germans, are suited to do research work; rather it is just a small elite relative to the total number that are able to conduct this highest achievement of human

development."[51] Despite the animosity that both Haeckel and Ostwald frequently expressed toward the Catholic clergy, they conveniently failed to perceive or acknowledge any dangers or negative consequences of a special caste of community leaders so long as they were enlightened *Wissenschaftler*. In fact Ostwald explicitly endorses a priestly class of scientists to lead society:

> Thus such a priesthood administers the sum of all knowledge and takes on the obligation to keep answers ready for all newly emerging problems. The great significance which collected knowledge has for all practical things, the healing of wounds or administration or whatever other fundamental needs of the evolving people, leads to the well-known great influence of every priesthood; it therefore assumes more or less directly the authority over the others and exercises it in the beginning primarily for the benefit of the peoples.[52]

For Ostwald, nothing less than the future of the nation depended on the advancement of this elite class of scientific-religious thinkers, "namely the rise of the talented. Today, where the future of our people will be for the most part determined by its solution, each anticipated answer to later questions will perhaps find some attention."[53] More to the point and embedded in his criticism of the German educational system, Ostwald implores his readership: "Because it really concerns the future of our people."[54] Significantly, both Haeckel and Ostwald foresaw beneficial consequences for the German nation in the work and influence of these monist monasteries and their leaders.

Universal Applications and the German Nation

To this point, our exploration of Haeckel's and Ostwald's monist thought has only hinted at the potential social engineering in the nation and beyond that a monist worldview could enable: science as a social force in Germany and the world. As we have seen, these two monist leaders believed that monism could surmount the purported conflict between religion and science and thus provide a renewed, cohesive unity of these two domains. In their model this required the rejection and dismantling of older religious institutions and models and their replacement by science. Yet these thinkers also envisioned far more extensive applications of their monist weltanschauung. Specifically, they asserted that the reunification of science and spirituality as a manifestation of a monist worldview that was based on the purported objectivity of science would have tangible ramifications in the political domain and would reconstitute community cohesiveness in the nation with universal ramifications.

For example, as Ernst Haeckel's monist thought was germinating during the two decades leading up to the publication of *Die Welträtsel* in 1899, he pleaded for the German nation to fulfill its colonial prerogatives. Specifically, in his travel report to India (1884), Haeckel also exemplified how his pantheistic nature religion could be applied to the purportedly less civilized.[55] Here his monist worldview powerfully echoes the colonial sentiments of France's Prime Minister Jules Ferry, who coined the term *mission civilisatrice*.[56] Yet Haeckel set his sights on more lucrative objectives than just civilizing the natives. In a revealing conclusion to his India travel report, Haeckel bemoans Germany's failure to keep up with the British:

> Thus instead of resentfully regarding the expansion and strengthening of the British world dominion with envious eyes, we should learn from their clever politics, from which the entirety of civilized humanity benefits. Had Germany, following the example of its tribal relative, England, established colonies in due time, how differently could the ennobling influence of German culture come to bear in the world; how much greater would our Fatherland stack up![57]

While Haeckel expresses no explicit link between monist thought and colonial prerogatives here, he conveys in no uncertain terms the universal benefits (*veredelnde Einfluß*) of German culture—when that culture embodies a monist worldview forged by the German *Wissenschaftler*—from which all lesser civilized cultures throughout the world could benefit. Thus science and social engineering—monism—coalesce in this universal-global assertion of German culture.

Two decades later, during Ostwald's presidency of the *Monistenbund*, the purported benefits of colonial endeavor certainly would have seemed far less enticing. Haeckel's colonial appeals, for instance, became muted after the turn of the century. The German colonial effort had been tarnished by the German massacre of Herero rebels in 1904 and the generally poor economic results from the German colonies, yet still colonial fever hardly abated.[58] Nevertheless by the beginning of the First World War, such colonial undertones seemed perhaps no longer particularly compatible with a monist vision of the world. Despite this alteration in colonial prerogatives, the national and universal implications of a monist worldview still underlay Ostwald's thought. In an essay entitled "Ist der Monismus staatsgefährlich? [Is Monism dangerous to the state?]," from the third volume of his *Monistische Sonntagspredigten* (1913), Ostwald, for instance, addresses the political facets of monist influence in the nation. Here he envisions the scientist as the new leader of the state:

> The preservation of the state can be effected only by such a statesman, who understands the technical-scientific development of our time, and who instead of squandering the energies of the nation through useless opposition to this development, places them in the service of national interests instead.[59]

Only the scientist embodies the knowledge, skill, and training to proficiently harness and usurp the nation's energies—a priestly class of science gurus who also conduct the political affairs of the state. The national interest that Ostwald refers to depends, as he sees it, on a monist worldview. That is, in a remarkable twist of logic for a physical chemist with a Nobel Prize under his belt, once the monist scientist assumes leadership of the nation the resulting benefits to the modern state confirm monism's indispensability in the political sphere:

> Only a permeation of monist thought can enable our governments and state leaders to act to preserve the state. Only this thought develops in them the higher capability of *State development*, *State organization* that is singly the fitting form of existence for contemporary cultural humanity.[60]

With astonishing political ramifications, Ostwald asserts here that monism provides the only means through which the modern state can perpetuate itself successfully.

These examples demonstrate the implicit yet detectable political visions that underlay the assertion of monism's unified scientific and spiritual model for the nation but also point to the universal applications that these two thinkers endorsed. As Ostwald explains in the previous citation, monism forms the foundation for life (*Existenzform*) for all civilized human beings (*Kulturmenschheit*). Yet importantly, Ostwald set his sights on even more significant outcomes for the emerging *monistisches Jahrhundert*: "Only through its nurture and enhancement does it [monism] put its people into the position, economically and culturally, to march dutifully at the apex of the entire world movement."[61] Here, like Haeckel, Ostwald's contention extends monism's reach beyond the German nation and spells out its prerogatives and influence for the entire world (*Weltbewegung*)—an affirmation of Germany's universal role.

With particular emphasis Ostwald explains in this same essay the significance of monism's forthcoming predominance as a universally applicable worldview:

> *Only the scientific grasp of world processes, only the scientific mastery of all events from the technical to the economic and political gives the*

> *governments the gauge necessary for reliable anticipation of the future, which is required in order to take every measure in the sense of turning out the long lasting welfare, the enhancement of the spiritual and material goods of the nation.*[62]

Here the stakes and objective of implementing a monist worldview in the German nation attain their most forceful manifestation. From this point of view, a scientific worldview manifests the only secure and reliable means for the permanent well-being and advance of both the spiritual and material objectives (*innern und äußern Güter*) of the nation in all domains of human life and activity (*gesamten Geschehnisse*). In this model, the science gurus of the German nation, whether explicitly intended or not, embody papal-like authority to generate, authorize, and disseminate "truth."

In summary, this brief analysis of two important monist thinkers during the late Kaiserreich uncovers how their thought attempts to reconcile the disquieting dispute between spirituality and science that had become such a dominant feature of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century culture—a conflict that is of course still with us today. While Haeckel and Ostwald perhaps honestly attempted to reconstitute spirituality as an amalgamation with empirical science, their thought nevertheless reverted to hyperbolic assertions about the superiority and exclusivity of science as the source for all human knowledge. As a result, the elite practitioners of science—monist *Wissenschaftler*—envisioned a special status in the nation. Their monist worldview demanded the very monopoly on knowledge creation—truth—generated by a priestly class of scientists—both features of traditional Christian institutions that these two thinkers so deplored.

Moreover, their attempt to emancipate German culture and society from worn out models of spirituality that traditional religious institutions offered regressed too easily in Haeckel's and Ostwald's monist model to a manifestation of an elite priestly class of scientists destined to lead the world to a better place—and thus made it vulnerable to more ominous visions of social engineering.[63] To put it another way, their monist weltanschauung—knowingly or not—perhaps impeded the requisite pluralism that might have helped to resist the forthcoming temptations of demagogic fascism. It is not my intention to link monist thought directly to Nazi ideology, or blame the latter on the former.[64] Nevertheless the monist attempt to create a German synthesis of science and religion led by a priestly class of elite scientists became perhaps an inadvertent catalyst for a set of ideological undercurrents that were harnessed and conveniently reformulated later by Nazi ideologues. The monist assertion that a priestly class of elite thinkers would lead the nation and the world reflected the incipient lure of fascism while helping undermine the requisite parameters for pluralist, democratic debate that might have provided more effective resistance to Nazi ideology.

Notes

I would like to thank the editors and anonymous readers for their insightful comments on this essay. I would also like to thank Susanne Myers for improving all the translations. Her exceptional linguistic talents are greatly appreciated. Errors remain my own.

[1] Darwin's work was not the first scientific challenge to traditional religious views, as James Secord has shown in his analysis of *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, which was originally published in 1844 and sparked intense debate. See James A. Secord, *Victorian Sensation: The Extraordinary Publication, Reception, and Secret Authorship of Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[2] Significant secondary material exists on Ernst Haeckel, much of which unfairly attempts to link Haeckel and his monist ideas to National Socialism. One such work is Daniel Gasman, *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004). For a more balanced and thorough rendering, see Robert J. Richards, *The Tragic Sense of Life: Ernst Haeckel and the Struggle over Evolutionary Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). On monism, see Todd H. Weir, ed., *Monism: Science, Philosophy, Religion, and the History of a Worldview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[3] See Todd H. Weir, *Secularism and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Germany: The Rise of the Fourth Confession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Weir's important work effectively shows that German "secular" movements or "marginal religious communities" became a significant "confession field" during the era. For another important account of German science and culture during the era, see Anne Harrington, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). Harrington examines the concept of "wholeness" in science during the Kaiserreich and after the First World War and traces how "holistic" science later became "racialized" by Germany's National Socialists. My work here remains focused on monism during the Kaiserreich and does not explore how race played out in their thought, which has already been fruitfully researched. In addition to Harrington, see Richard Weikart, "Progress through Racial Extermination: Social Darwinism, Eugenics, and Pacifism in Germany, 1860–1918," *German Studies Review* 27, no. 2 (2003): 273–94, and Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics Between National Unification and Nazism, 1870–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[4] Caspar Hakfoort, "Science Deified: Wilhelm Ostwald's Energeticist World-View and the History of Scientism," *Annals of Science* 49, no. 6 (1992): 528.

[5] Ernst Haeckel, *Die Welträtsel: Gemeinverständliche Studien über monistische Philosophie* (1899; Stuttgart: Kroner Verlag, 1984), 401. Haeckel's text was very controversial at the time but also attained a wide readership. Robert J. Richards reports in *The Tragic Sense of Life* that during its first year forty thousand copies were produced and four hundred thousand copies and been sold prior to the First World War (398), a sales record at the time.

[6] Theosophy asserts that there is a core truth in all religions but that only the theosophically adept can uncover this "secret doctrine," as Blavatsky

expressed it. For background on Blavatsky, see Bruce Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994). On occultism in the British context, see Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). For a more in-depth study of Germany's intellectual borrowings from India during this era, see my *German Visions of India, 1871–1918: Commandeering the Holy Ganges during the Kaiserreich* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); also important is Douglas T. McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism: Ancient India's Re-Birth in Modern Germany* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009).

[7] Harrington, *Reenchanted Science*, 19. Particularly relevant for my work here is Harrington's first chapter, "The 'Human Machine' and the Call to 'Wholeness.'" While Harrington focuses on the concept of wholeness as a means for scientists to correct "mechanistic" scientific models or what they viewed as the dismantling of the paramount position of the human being in God's universe, I emphasize how monist thinkers attempted to reassert their "distinction," or "symbolic capital," to borrow Bourdieu's terminology, in the *Kaiserreich*.

[8] Weir, *Secularism and Religion*, 258.

[9] Some work on the occult movements in Germany has been published. See especially Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), and Nicholas Goodricke-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and Their Influence on Nazi Ideology* (London: Tauris Parke, 2005).

[10] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 443; "*Es gibt nicht zwei verschiedene, getrennte Welten*: eine *physische, materielle* und eine *moralische, immaterielle Welt*" (emphasis in original).

[11] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 443; "Das praktische Leben stellt an den Menschen eine Reihe von ganz bestimmten sittlichen Anforderungen, die nur dann richtig und naturgemäß erfüllt werden können, wenn sie in reinem Einklang mit seiner vernünftigen Weltanschauung stehen. Diesem Grundsatze unserer monistischen Philosophie zufolge muß unsere gesamte *Sittenlehre* oder Ethik in vernünftigen Zusammenhang mit der einheitlichen Auffassung des 'Kosmos' stehen, welche wir durch unsere fortgeschrittene Erkenntnis der Naturgesetze gewonnen haben" (emphasis in original).

[12] Haeckel, *Welträtsel,* 443; "unendliches Unheil angerichtet und wirkt noch heute mächtig fort." Put simply, Kant, in his renowned *Critiques*, argued that the divine existed in the noumenological world and could not be intuitively perceived, whereas the phenomenological sphere is cognitively accessible. For background on Kant's thought, see Jill Vance Buroker, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[13] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 446.

[14] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 452.

[15] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 452; "auf alles Glück im Diesseits zu verzichten und alle dazu erforderlichen *irdischen Güter* gering zu achten" (emphasis in original).

[16] Wilhelm Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1912), 211; "Ausgestaltung einer neuen Ethik, welche dem modernen Menschen angemessen ist und die tatsächlich vorhandene praktische Ethik, welche trotz vielfältiger Mängel und Unzulänglichkeiten doch unser Leben entscheidend erfüllt und beherrscht zum klaren Ausdruck bringt." *Monistische Sonntagspredigten* appeared as a series of essays written and published during Ostwald's tenure as president of the *Monistenbund* from 1911 to 1915.

[17] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 2, 211; "durchaus eine Ethik von dieser Welt und für diese Welt . . . nichts anderes ist, als die Lehre vom gegenseitigen Verhalten der Menschen in der menschlichen Gesellschaft, also mit andern Worten daß die Ethik angewandte Soziologie sein muß und nichts anderes sein kann." Ostwald seems to be concerned with only those religions originating in the Mesopotamian basin, unlike many others during the era including Haeckel, who were fascinated with Eastern traditions. For more detail, see Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); also my *German Visions of India*.

[18] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 1, 3; "Nun aber verdanken wir wiederum der Wissenschaft die grundlegende Erkenntnis von der Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechtes, von seinem Fortschreiten zu immer höherem ethischen Empfinden und Denken. Wir müssen daraus allgemein schließen und sehen es auch in einem jeden einzelnen Falle bestätigt, daß *jede Religion, je älter sie ist, um so mehr sich mit dem Denken und Empfinden der gegenwärtigen Zeit in Widerspruch setzt*" (emphasis in original).

[19] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 1, 157; "nur der monistische Gedanke hat also die Fähigkeit, den Bedürfnissen nicht nur des einzelenen, sondern gleichzeitig denen der *Gesamtheit* engegenzukommen und *nur der monistische Gedanke hat deshalb Anspruch darauf, von der Gesamtheit gefördert zu werden*" (emphasis in original).

[20] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 3, 136.

[21] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 427–28; "Gerade zur Förderung dieser hohen Ziele erscheint es höchst wichtig, daß die moderne Naturwissenschaft nicht bloß die Wahngebilde des Aberglaubens zertrümmert und deren wüsten Schutt aus dem Wege räumt, sondern daß sie auch auf dem frei gewordenen Bauplatze ein neues wohnliches Gebäude für das menschliche Gemüt herrichtet; einen *Palast der Vernunft*, in welchem wir mittelst unserer neu gewonnenen monistischen Weltanschauung die wahre 'Dreieinigkeit' des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts andächtig verehren, die *Trinität des Wahren, Guten und Schönen*" (emphasis in original).

[22] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 428; "reine Wahrheit nur in dem Tempel der Naturerkenntnis zu finden ist"; "die empirische Erforschung der Tatsachen und die vernunftgemäße Erkenntnis ihrer bewirkenden Ursachen."

[23] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 428; "jede Glaubensdichtung, welche behauptet, auf übernatürlichem Wege Wahrheiten zu erkennen."

[24] Ernst Haeckel, *Der Monismus als Band zwischen Religion und Wissenschaft* (Bonn: Verlag von Emil Strauss, 1892), 35; "Überall öffnet uns die Gott-Natur eine unerschöpliche Quelle ästhetischer Genüsse."

[25] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 4, 13; "wie wir aus dieser uns zur Organisation entwickeln können. Die Antwort auf diese Frage ist die wohl bekannte: Nur die wissenschaftliche Weltanschauung gestattet eine Organisation, ja die Organisation in diesem Sinne ist das Wesen der wissenschaftlichen Weltanschauung."

[26] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*,vol. 1, 2; "Die unmittelbar glückbringenden schöpferischen Gedanken liefert uns nun die Wissenschaft in erster Linie."

[27] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 478; "Die Zahl der Welträtsel hat sich durch die angeführten Fortschritte der wahren Naturerkenntnis im Laufe des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts stetig vermindert; sie ist schließlich auf ein einziges allumfassendes Universalrätsel zurückgeführt, auf das *Substanz-Problem*" (emphasis in original).

[28] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 478; "Was als '*Ding an sich*' hinter den erkennbaren Erscheinungen steckt, das wissen wir auch heute noch nicht" (emphasis in original).

[29] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 479; "universalen *Entwickelungs*-Gesetz"; "universalen Einheit der Natur und der ewigen Geltung der Naturgesetze" (emphasis in original). Haeckel defines the *Substanz-Gesetz* as "Grundgesetz von der Erhaltung der Kraft und des Stoffes" (479; basic law of the preservation of energy and matter). In preceding chapters of *Die Welträtsel* Haeckel presents a more detailed elaboration of the *Substanz-Gesetz* (273–94) and what he terms the "*Entwicklungsgeschichte der Welt*" (299–319; history of the world's development).

[30] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 479–80; "Die alte Weltanschauung des *Ideal-Dualismus* mit ihren mystischen und anthropistischen Dogmen versinkt in Trümmer; aber über diesem gewaltigen Trümmerfelde steigt hehr und herrlich die neue Sonne unseres *Real-Monismus* auf, welche uns den wunderbaren Tempel der Natur voll erschließt. In dem reinen Kultus des 'Wahren, Guten und Schönen,' welcher den Kern unserer neuen *monistischen Religion* bildet, finden wir reichen Ersatz für die verlorenen anthropistischen Ideale von 'Gott, Freiheit und Unsterblichkeit'" (emphasis in original).

[31] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 1, 35; "So ist also das Gesamtbild, das uns die Kulturgeschichte der Menschheit zeigt, eine stets in gleicher Richtung stattfindende *Ersetzung der Religion durch die Wissenschaft*, wenn es sich um die Erforschung der Wahrheit handelt" (emphasis in original).

[32] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 1, 41; "Von der Wissenschaft erwarten und beanspruchen wir nicht weniger, als *daß sie alle Dinge ohne Ausnahme, die für unser Leben in Betracht kommen, ihrer Herrschaft unterwirft*" (emphasis in original).

[33] Wilhelm Ostwald, "Die Wissenschaft," in *Der erste internationale Monisten Kongress herausgegeben im Auftrag des Vorstandes der Deutschen Monisten-Bundes* (Leipzig: Kröner, 1912), 112; "Denn die Wissenschaft ist das eigne Werk der Menschheit und wir nahen uns ihr nicht wie einem absoluten Herrscher, auf dessen Entscheidung, die wir in keiner Weise voraussehen können, wir in Demut warten müssen, *sondern wir nahen ihr uns auf dem Wege der ehrlichen und aufrichtigen Arbeit. Und sie entscheidet unsern Wünschen gegenüber nicht nach Willkür, sondern nach dem, worauf unser eigenes Wesen gegründet ist, nach den Naturgesetzen*" (emphasis in original).

[34] Ostwald, "Die Wissenschaft," 111; "Die Wissenschaft nimmt hier mit unermeßlichen Erfolge wiederum die Stelle der Gottheit ein."

[35] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 4, 61–62; "Wir streben nicht einen Monismus a priori an, indem wir vermuten oder behaupten, daß aus irgendeinem einzelnen Prinzip, sei es Wasser, sei es Gott, die ganze Welt herauszuspinnen ist, sondern wir erleben die Welt zunächst als ein unerschöpflich mannigfaltiges Chaos, und *konstatieren hernach in Übereinstimmung mit der Wissenschaft, daß es der Kraft des menschlichen Geistes Stufe für Stufe gelingt, in dieses Chaos Ordnung zu bringen oder aus dem Chaos einen Kosmos zu gestalten*" (emphasis in original).

[36] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 480. "Aber freilich, konsequentes Denken bleibt eine seltene Naturerscheinung!"; "Die Zahl derjenigen Denker [ist immer] klein gewesen, welche diesen Dualismus tapfer überwanden und sich dem reinen Monismus zuwendeten."

[37] Very little secondary material exists on Wille, but Erik Lehnert in his essay, "'Tiefes Gemüt, klarer Verstand und tapfere Kulturarbeit': Bruno Wille und der Friedrichshagener Dichterkreis als Ausgangspunkt monistischer Kulturpolitik im Kaiserreich," in *Darwin, Haeckel und die Folgen: Monismus in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, ed. Arnher E. Lenz and Volker Mueller (Neustadt am Rübenberge: Lenz-Verlag, 2006), 247–73, points out that Wille was active among the *Freireligiösen und Freidenkern* (free religion and free thought) with social-democratic sympathies. In 1887, when the Berlin *Freireligiösen* split, Wille chose to join the social democratic group (249); also see Weir, *Secularism and Religion*, 258–62 on Wille's role as cofounder of the Giordano Bruno League.

[38] Bruno Wille, "Faustischer Monismus," in *Der Monismus dargestellt in Beiträgen seiner Vertreter*, ed. Arthur Drews (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1908), 274.

[39] Wille, "Faustischer Monismus," 244; "Die spezialistischen Naturforscher, die ich im Auge habe, sind entweder Agnostiker, d. h. sie unterlassen grundsätzlich jede philosophische und religiöse Weltdeutung, oder aber sie huldigen, selbst wenn sie dabei auf publizistische Formulierung verzichten, einer Weltanschauung, die als Materialismus oder Mechanismus, zugleich aber auch als Brutalismus bezeichnet werden kann."

[40] Wille, "Faustischer Monismus," 250; "Die Materie könne nie ohne Geist, der Geist nie ohne Materie existieren." Goethe's original, from "Erläuterung zu dem aphoristischen Aufsatz 'Die Natur' von 1783 (Auszug eines Breifes von Goethe an den Kanzler v. Müller von 1828)," reads, "Weil aber die Materie nie ohne Geist, der Geist nie ohne Materie existiert und wirksam sein kann, so vermag auch die Materie sich zu steigern, so wie sich's der Geist nehmen läßt, anzuziehen und abzustoßen" (But because matter can never exist nor be effective without spirit, nor spirit without matter; matter is also able to augment itself, just as the spirit allows itself to attract and repulse).

[41] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 481; "Die Verschmelzung der anscheinenden Gegensätze"; "der Fortschritt zur Lösung des fundamentalen Welträtsels"; "wird uns aber durch das stetig zunehmende Wachstum der Naturerkenntnis mit jedem Jahre näher gelegt. So dürfen wir uns denn der frohen Hoffnung hingeben, daß das *zwanzigste Jahrhundert* jene Gegensätze immer mehr ausgleichen und durch

Ausbildung des *reinen Monismus* die ersehnte Einheit der Weltanschauung in weiten Kreisen verbreiten wird" (emphasis in original).

[42] Wilhelm Ostwald, *Lebenslinien. Eine Selbstbiographie. Dritter Teil: Gross-Bothen und die Welt. 1905–1927* (Berlin: Klasing, 1927), 3.

[43] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 423. "klaren und folgerichten Auffassung des Monismus tatsächlich die beiden Begriffe von Religion und Wissenschaft zu Einem miteinander verschmelzen"; "Indessen nur wenige entschlossene Denker ringen sich zu dieser höchsten und reinsten Auffassung von Spinoza und Goethe empor; vielmehr verharren die meisten Gebildeten unserer Zeit (ganz abgesehen von den ungebildeten Volksmassen) bei der Überzeugung, daß die Religion ein selbständiges, von der Wissenschaft unabhängiges Gebiet unseres Geisteslebens darstelle, nicht minder wertvoll und unentbehrlich als die letztere."

[44] Haeckel, *Welträtsel*, 424; "wohnt im Innersten von fast allen unbefangenen und denkenden Naturforschern, wenn auch nur wenige den Mut oder das Bedürfnis haben, sie offen zu bekennen."

[45] Wilhelm Ostwald, *Grosse Männer* (Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1909).

[46] Wilhelm Ostwald's concept of *Energetik* asserted, in opposition to the era's hypothesis of an atomic theory of matter, that only through the interaction of energy can perceptible scientific deviations be measured. More pertinent to my essay's discussion, in *Die Energie* (Leipzig: Verlag von Johann Abrosius Barth, 1908), 143–44, Ostwald writes, "Dadurch, daß die Materie als ein Komplex von verschiedenen Energien erkannt worden ist, der aber keineswegs sämtliche bekannten Energien umfaßt (u. a. nicht Elektrizität und Licht) und daher in ganz bestimmter Weise einseitig ist, ist das eine Glied des Gegensatzes Geist—Materie aufgehoben worden" (Because matter has been acknowledged as an aggregate of different energies that in no case includes all known energies [among others not electricity and light] and therefore is in a certain sense one-sided, the one link of the opposites spirit-matter was made void). For related background, see Jagdish Mehra and Helmut Rechenberg, *The Historical Development of Quantum Theory*, vol. 5 (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1982), 58; also Eckard Daser, "Ostwalds Energetischer Monismus" (PhD diss., University of Constance, 1980).

[47] Ostwald considered the idea of a "great woman" unlikely in the near future. In fact, he devotes some space to the role of women in the book's final chapter. There he surmises, "Die sich hieran schließende Frage nach der selbstständigen wissenschaftlichen Betätigung der Frauen an den kulturellen Pionierarbeiten läßt sich ziemlcih kurz dahin beantworten, *daß eine solche bisher nicht stattgefunden hat und voraussichtlich auch in absehbarer Zeit nicht stattfinden wird*" (417; Here the follow-up question about the independent scientific activity of women regarding the cultural pioneering work can be answered quickly, in that such work has thus far not occurred and probably will in the foreseeable future not occur, emphasis in original).

[48] Wilhelm Ostwald, "Die Wissenschaft," in *Der erste internationale Monisten Kongress herausgegeben im Auftrag des Vorstandes der Deutschen Monisten-Bundes* (Leipzig: Kröner, 1912), 98; "Der Forscher . . . beschäftigt sich mit Fragen, welche weit über das Interesse und die Betätigung des Augenblicks hinausgehen. Und je wichtiger und weitgreifender diese Fragen sind, um so achtungsvoller

sehen wir der Tätigkeit des Forschers zu, um so dankbarer begrüßen wir die Ergebnisse, die seine Arbeit bringt."

[49] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten,* vol. 2, 400; "So kann ich mir dann auch hernach monistische Kolonien denken, welche in gemeinsamer Arbeit ganz bestimmte wissenschaftliche Gebiete bearbeiten, indem ein schöpferischer und bahnbrechender Forscher von entsprechender Gesinnung sich geradezu selbst in solch einer Kolonie ansiedelt."

[50] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 3, 119; "ihrer hervorragendsten Führer eine Stellung zum Leben gefunden hat, welche den einzelnen wirklich dem angestrebten Zustande reinen und vollkommenen Glückes auf einem sozialem Wege so nahe wie möglich bringt."

[51] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 1, 30; "Anderseits sind keineswegs alle, noch auch viele Deutsche geeignet, Forscherarbeit zu tun; es ist vielmehr nur eine ganz kleine Auslese im Verhältnis zur Gesamtzahl, welche diese höchste Leistung menschlicher Entwicklung auszuführen vermögen."

[52] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 1, 195; "So verwaltet eine solche Priesterschaft die Summe alles Wissens und übernimmt die Verpflichtung, für alle neu auftretenden Probleme die Antwort bereit zu halten. Die große Bedeutung, welche aufgesammeltes Wissen für alle praktischen Dinge, Wundheilung oder Verwaltung oder irgendwelche andern fundamentalen Bedürfnisse der werdenden Völker hat, bedingt sachgemäß den bekannten großen Einfluß jeder Priesterschaft; sie nimmt daher die Herrschaft über die andern mehr oder weniger unmittelbar an sich und übt sie zunächst wohl vorwiegend zum Wohle der Völker aus."

[53] Ostwald, *Grosse Männer*, vii; "nämlich den Aufstieg der Begabten. Heute, wo die Zukunft unseres Volkes zu einem wesentlichen Teil von dessen Lösung mitbestimmt werden wird, wird vielleicht jene vorausgenommene Antwort auf die spätere Frage einige Beachtung finden."

[54] Ostwald, *Grosse Männer*, 354; "Denn es handelt sich wirklich um die Zukunft unseres Volkes."

[55] Ernst Haeckel went on several exploratory trips during his lifetime and wrote travel reports on each one. In the case of India, where he travelled in 1881–82, see *Indische Reisebriefe*, 3rd ed. (1884; Berlin: Gebrüder Paetel, 1895). For a more elaborate discussion of Haeckel's Indian travel report as a manifestation of his monistic worldview, see my "Monistic Visions and Colonial Consciousness: Ernst Haeckel's *Indische Reisebriefe*," *Seminar* 44, no. 2 (May 2008): 190–209. Also exemplary in a related sense is the colonial agitator and theosophist Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden. Here see Treitel, *Science for the Soul*, 85–93; also on Hübbe-Schleiden, see my *German Visions of India*, 149–67.

[56] The term *mission civilisatrice* originated from the French Prime Minister, Jules Ferry (1832–1893). See Robert Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 97–100. On Germany's civilizing mission, see Nina Berman, *Impossible Missions? German Economic, Military, and Humanitarian Efforts in Africa* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

[57] Haeckel, *Indische Reisebriefe*, 414; "Statt daher die Erweiterung und Verstärkung der britischen Weltherrschaft grollend mit den Augen des Neides

anzusehen, sollten wir von ihrer klugen Politik lernen, deren Erfolge der ganzen civilisirten Menschheit zu gute kommen. Hätte Deutschland, dem Beispiele des Stammverwandten England folgend, rechtzeitig Colonien gegründet, wie anders könnte der veredelnde Einfluß der deutschen Cultur sich in der Welt geltend machen; wie viel größer würde unser Vaterland dastehen!"

[58] For an overview, see Wolfgang Mommsen, "The Causes and Objectives of German Imperialism before 1914," in *Imperial Germany, 1867–1918: Politics, Culture, and Society in an Authoritarian State*, trans. Richard Deveson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 75–100; Klaus Bade, *Imperialismus und Kolonialmission: Kaiserliches Deutschland und koloniales Imperium* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1984); Woodruff Smith, *The German Colonial Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978). A more recent analysis is Carol Aisha Blackshire-Belay, "German Imperialism in Africa: The Distorted Images of Cameroon, Namibia, Tanzania, and Togo," *Journal of Black Studies* 23, no. 2 (December 1992): 235–46. On the Herero struggle against the Germans, see Horst Drechsler, *"Let Us Die Fighting": The Struggle of the Herero and Nama Against German Imperialism (1884–1915)*, trans. Bernd Zöllner (London: Zed Press, 1980).

[59] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 3, 135; "Staatserhaltend im eigentlichen Sinne wird also nur ein solcher Staatsmann wirken können, der die technisch-wissenschaftliche Entwicklung unserer Zeit versteht und der, statt die Energien der Nation durch einen zwecklosen Widerstand gegen diese Entwicklung zu vergeuden, sie im Gegenteil in den Dienst der nationalen Interessen stellt."

[60] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 3, 136; "Nur eine Durchdringung mit monistischem Denken kann unsere Regierungen und Staatsoberhäupter zu staatserhaltender Tätigkeit befähigen. Nur sie entwickelt in ihnen auch die höhere Fähigkeit der *Staatsentwicklung*, der *Staatsausgestaltung*, welche allein die angemessene Existenzform für die heutige Kulturmenschheit ist" (emphasis in original).

[61] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 3, 135; "Nur durch ihre Pflege und Steigerung bringt er [monism] sein Volk in die Lage, wirtschaftlich und kulturell tunlichst an der Spitze der ganzen Weltbewegung zu marschieren."

[62] Ostwald, *Monistische Sonntagspredigten*, vol. 3, 135; "*Nur die wissenschaftliche Erfassung des Weltgeschehens, nur die wissenschaftliche Beherrschung der gesamten Geschehnisse von den technischen bis zu den wirtschaftlichen und politischen gibt den Regierungen dasjenige Maß von sicherer Vorausnahme der Zukunft, welches erforderlich ist, um jede einzelne Maßnahme in solchem Sinne zu treffen, daß sie zum dauernden Wohle, zur Steigerung der innern und äußern Güter der Nation ausfällt*" (emphasis in original; Ostwald italicized the entire passage).

[63] For more background on German responses to the social, cultural, and political dilemmas during this era, see Kevin Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-Politics and the Search for Alternatives (1890–1914)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[64] Here the debates spurned by the *Sonderweg* (special path) thesis, by the Fischer controversy, and by Daniel Goldhagen's assertions come to mind. For an excellent overview of the debates and the evolution of historiography on the Second Empire, see Matthew Jefferies, *Contesting the German Empire, 1871–1918* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).

3: Max Hoelz Haunts the Vogtland: The Visible and the Invisible in Germany, 1914–21

John Ondrovcik

I

On the morning of September 20, 1920, in the Saxon city of Plauen, an auxiliary policeman by the name of Rettig presented himself to his superior to make an extraordinary report. The night before, in the center of the town of Falkenstein, he had met, talked, and walked with the notorious revolutionary, Max Hoelz, who had been unaccounted for since August.

The authorities in Saxony had been hunting Hoelz since his political career began, in early 1919, with a series of local putsches (*Putsche*): his "movement of the unemployed" attacked the city halls of Plauen and Falkenstein, opened the jails, and established a shadow government in Falkenstein sworn to protect the rights and welfare of the town's poorest citizens. Newspaper coverage of the subsequent hunt for Hoelz—which would not end until the spring of 1921—concentrated on his ability to disappear seemingly at will. Jailed twice in 1919, he had escaped twice. "The Communist Hölz," the *Vogtländischer Anzeiger* reported after one such incident, "is no longer in Hannover [where he had been arrested], and has appeared at a Communist assembly in Falkenstein. After this, he disappeared once more into the darkness of the night, out of which he had appeared."[1] A number of military dragnets sent to the Vogtland to capture him failed, and local children began to taunt soldiers on the hunt for him: "You're looking for Max Hölz? Here, we have him in our pockets!"[2] On March 16, 1920, when fourteen of Hoelz's comrades were put on trial for the insurrection of 1919, the *Anzeiger*, whose printing presses had been attacked by a group of Hoelz-supporters the previous year, clearly resented Hoelz's absence in the dock. "The evil spirit upon whom all the blame should be shifted," the *Anzeiger* noted, "remains Hoelz, the invisible one [*der Unsichtbare*]."[3]

Consistent with the *Anzeiger*'s view of him, the Hoelz Rettig encountered that September evening was ethereal, even preternatural. Hoelz was

accompanied, Rettig claimed, by "two veiled women" who followed him "a few steps behind." The women retreated when Rettig approached, but he "immediately and without a doubt recognized Hölz, who wore a soft, dark, felt hat and a glued-on, false, two-part goatee." "Guten Tag, Herr Hölz," Rettig said, and although Hoelz was momentarily taken aback, he invited Rettig to follow him. They walked for ten minutes along Oelsnitzer Strasse, the main road leading south out of town. When the pair got to "the last house on the right at the exit of Falkenstein," Hoelz motioned for Rettig to follow him up a track that turned off the road and led across a field. The two women had since reappeared; Rettig could see them some distance up the path, waiting for Hoelz to rejoin them. Something about this scene was clearly unsettling for Rettig. He told his superior that, since he was "unarmed and did not trust Hoelz and his companions," he begged off and went the other way.[4]

Had this really been Hoelz? Vogtländers had learned that little was certain when it came to him. Hoelz's popularity—and notoriety—in the Vogtland was based on his ability to manipulate, or appear to manipulate, the boundary between the visible and the invisible, the authentic and the disguised. The influence Hoelz's manipulations had on Vogtlanders was certainly anchored in their own experiences of war and revolution. The war-time regime of ersatz foodstuffs, the increased instances of violence and crime—especially murder—and political instability combined to create a context that Vogtlanders came to understand in terms of dangers that were both seen and the unseen. This essay examines the way that communities in the Vogtland—especially Falkenstein, Hoelz's adopted hometown, and Plauen, the capital of the region—explored and accounted for the visible and invisible forces seemingly at work in shaping their everyday lives, the moral and political fabric of their communities, and, by extension, the nation as a whole.

By weaving together rumor, reportage, literary allusion, and traditional notions of evil forces with politics, morality, and local events, Vogtlanders produced an integrated system of explanation and meaning-production that mapped the revolutionary world not only physically but also morally and politically. Some of the denizens of those maps (like Hoelz) can be understood as figures within a "moral phantasmagoria," a kind of "bestiary of folk belief" into which individuals deemed harmful to the community's moral unity were inducted.[5] The logic of the phantasmagoria inhered in association and analogy, tied to a way of seeing the world as a system of intelligible signs and signals pointing off toward some unity of experience and comprehension. The underlying assumption is that one need only interpret the world correctly for that unity to be descried. At one level, the point of this rationality for those who employed it was in the maintenance of the national and emotional community, the identification of sources of harm, the assessment of the

strengths and weaknesses of social and moral bonds, and the translation of these findings into a symbolic language anchored in the experience of the community.[6] It appealed to the evidence of experience, the senses, analogy, and narrative logic in a way that resisted hierarchalizing them; at the same time, it hardly claimed that its interpretations were politically neutral. Such pattern-making is what some historians have seen at the root of "societalization" (*Vergesellschaftung*), "the formation of a cultural code or, really, a succession of codes that put and hold together a texture of belonging."[7] In another way of putting it, it activates the "local logic of explanation" that drives rumor, gossip, and, sometimes, the creation of embodied metaphors of the walking dead.[8]

Vogtlanders understood Hoelz's appearances and disappearances in terms of that phantasmagoria, that is, in terms of a fund of collective memory, metaphorical accounts of historical trauma, and attitudes about the source of danger in the world that phantasmagoria represented. Yet his role in this was hardly passive. He actively sought to shape and even take control of the process by which the phantasmagoria was invoked, related to local events, and revised in light of recent experience. His public performances of derring-do, his vanishing acts, and his virtuoso manipulation of Vogtlanders' concern for the visible and the invisible helped him make the claim that he occupied an intermediate position along the boundary of the seen and the unseen. In the uncertain, dangerous, and illegible world of war and revolution, where physical safety, moral security, and political acuity depended on the ability to diagnosis properly the relationships between the visible and the invisible, such a claim had the power to transmute awe, fear, anxiety—even hope—into political authority, a formula that found a place at the center of interwar political culture.

II

For a great many Germans, the world of war and revolution was illegible. Once reliable signs of social and political stability either collapsed altogether or turned inside out. "The War," Albrecht Mendelssohn-Bartholdy wrote, "canceled causality." "Relations between cause and consequence which had been fixed as an element of thinking and planning in every sane human being's mind became uncertain and fallacious." It was, in a word, no longer possible to maintain one's sense of reality because the realm of the possible had expanded beyond anyone's ken. The war, as a result, introduced what Mendelssohn-Bartholdy called "an almost fantastic element of the incalculable and the unreal" into everyday life.[9]

In many ways, the problem of reading revolutionary Germany was one of overproduction: of signs, crowds, interests, emotions, and violence.[10] Train stations, assembly halls, town squares, and other public spaces were overrun by what Gustav Noske called "a monstrous rabble of

soldiers, workers, and girls," something that caused the orderly processes of imperial politics to collapse. Political meetings devolved into "screaming concerts" (*Schreikonzerten*) where debate was carried by the person with "the greatest lung power."[11] Newspapers multiplied, tendentiousness proliferated, and rumor and news often melded. This state of affairs led Ludwig Renn, the déclassé Saxon aristocrat-cum-Communist, to denounce the Dresden press as entirely useless: it did nothing to help him puzzle out the differences between Majority and Independent Socialists, inform him on the ongoing war in the Baltic, or help him weed through the morass of charlatans and opportunists standing for election to his regiment's soldiers' council. (Years later, he would suggest that newsprint was good only for lining one's clothes in the winter).[12]

In the Vogtland, as in other places throughout the country, the breakdown of trust in information and the new illegibility of symbols of the social and political order were compounded by similar problems in the material world. Vogtlanders knew, for instance, that they lived in a world of ersatz, counterfeit, and fraud. In late 1918 and early 1919, for instance, complaints about the quality of foodstuffs in Plauen had finally inspired the city authorities to create a "Chemical Investigation Bureau" to investigate items sold by local grocers. The bureau found, among other things, tonics for minor ailments made almost entirely of "poisonous methyl alcohol"; a third of the milk samples taken from various stores in February 1919 was found to be "low grade or false"; a consignment of pepper was determined to be seventy-five percent corn meal, cereal flour, and cinnamon, and a batch of salt twenty-five percent chalk.[13] Local newspapers were replete with warnings about swindlers of all imaginable kinds. False comrades visited bereaved families, sometimes to collect on "debts" owed to them by dead servicemen (usually money, but also clothes and food). "Marriage swindlers" collected investments and loans from their newly enfianced parents-in-law, only to disappear as soon as payment was made. Ration-card swindles were especially common. In Plauen in October 1920, a warning went out about femme fatale Elise Schumann, who operated a pickpocket system in local bars; the year before, Georg Ließem, the "dentist swindler," went on trial for accepting eight thousand marks from a Plauen dentist for quantities of Indian rubber that he never delivered.[14]

Along with fraud and falsity, dangers proliferated. Between 1914 and 1921, the Vogtland was hit by the Spanish flu, a "plague of rats" and other vermin (muskrats multiplied in the town of Oelsnitz), "rabid dogs from Austrian areas," hoof-and-mouth disease, second-hand clothing infected with tuberculosis, and one natural anomaly ("quivering lightning of all colors" in the southern sky in September 1919).[15] "Outrages" (*Schandtaten*) were committed in increasing numbers against churches and cemeteries; sometimes crucifixes were stripped of silver; at other

times particular graves were vandalized again and again.[16] The activities of poachers, pilferers, and "field thieves" were met in the woods and fields by armed protection squads who shot at and sometimes killed suspected thieves, especially during the "pear war" of September 1919.[17] And with the revolution came the despised *Spitzel*: the informer, spy, saboteur, and counterfeit revolutionary who incited insurrection to entrap the despairing in prison sentences, led revolutionary organizations astray in the interests of industrialists, or told men like Hoelz where to find hoarders, profiteers, and enemies of the poor.[18]

The sum of illegibility, uncertainty, and danger was the creation of a moral phantasmagoria through which Vogtlanders strove to associate a great range of ills and achieve some level of clarity about the dangers they faced. In other words, they sought to locate events within a nexus of causes rooted primarily in sheer simultaneity. On February 23, 1919, for instance, the *Vogtländischer Anzeiger* published a short treatise on *Putschismus*, or "insurrectionism," which diagnosed it as a sickness introduced by foreign agents, and discussed it in terms that emphasized its invisible nature. "Like influenza," the editorial read, insurrectionism was a "spiritual epidemic" that had spread across Germany with "eerie speed," claiming "a multitude of victims." It serves no purpose to remain blind to what could be readily grasped, that "Russian Bolsheviks" had infected the German national body with an appetite (*Lust*) for "armed insurrection." "Five years of malnutrition" had weakened body and spirit and conjured up revolutionary "fever dreams": that the wealthy presided over "countless stocks of hoarded food" (*Hamsterlager*), that revolution meant emptying the "stalls, cellars, and storehouses" of the countryside, that mass strikes were somehow different than the Allied blockade, which put all German women and children under a "death sentence." The way out of this was to realize that, as the "compurgator" of anarchy, chaos, workshyness, and foreign influence, hunger bore false witness, a lie that threatened to dissolve the continuum of national health held together by labor, coal, food, electricity, and steam.[19]

The insurrectionist, the Communist, the smuggler, the malingerer, and the striker were all elements of a national phantasmagoria understood to have seeped out of the degraded unity of national life. It was not difficult for Vogtlanders to find homegrown specimens. The day after the *Anzeiger* published its screed against insurrectionism, Plauen itself became the scene of a putsch that grew out of a mass demonstration held by the city's "council of the unemployed" (*Arbeitslosenrat*), part of a network of such councils put together by Max Hoelz in the beginning of 1919. The city hall was stormed, the jail opened, the municipal abattoir looted, and Communist rule declared. The individuals charged with insurrection in the aftermath must have seemed to emerge directly out of the *Anzeiger*'s analysis of "putschism." They brought crime, deviance,

blood ties, Communism, unemployment, and insurrection together. The brothers and half-brothers Max Thümmler and Karl, Max, and Erich Oberreuther, for instance, had already been arrested for dealing a lively trade in black-market foodstuffs and livestock both during and after the war. On the day of the putsch, Erich was broken out of jail, and the group seen attacking gun shops, breaking machines at the *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, and filling their pockets with sausage and bacon at the abattoir.[20] The Oberreuthers were, in turn, of the same ilk as local types like "the notorious 'Robber Caro,'" a forty-five-year-old recidivist named Peter Johann Lang who, "sickly and weak," renounced work and elected instead to operate a forest abattoir into which he fed stolen cattle; or Hermann Möckel, "the accomplished simulator," thief, and fraudster, who "played the 'wild man'" at his trial in Plauen in October 1920, declaring to the courtroom that "I take it all away, I do what I want, and I go where I want!"[21]

In the Vogtland's moral imagination, men like this—and worse—were the "ogres," "furies," and "worms" (*Unholde*, *Wüterichs*, *Gewürme*) who populated the phantasmagoria of the revolutionary period.[22] They were understood to straddle the lines between the literal and the figurative, the political and the moral, the natural and the transcendental. They connected elements of local memory with new contexts; they magnified the power of past or long slumbering evils by way of contemporary technology and organization. It was through them that theories of evil were spun and respun, moral boundaries policed, and the dangers of the revolution measured.

The Vogtland's "wild men" and human "worms" were, furthermore, at the center of a moral map of the region that sought to identify dangerous spaces, link them with stories about the past, and reinforce the moral core of its communities. That core was understood to be at its weakest at the physical margins of towns and villages. The region's woods and fields, as well as the paths wending in and out of them and connecting neighboring towns, were particularly dangerous. They contained escaped prisoners of war, deserters, poachers, smugglers, highwaymen, pedophiles, rapists, and the corpses of murder victims and suicides.[23] The "Robber Caro" operated his illegal abattoir in the woods west of Plauen, and the serial killer Richard Möckel, who raped, killed, and mutilated five young people between 1915 and 1920, left three of his victims in forests outside of Plauen and Reichenbach.[24] In late July 1920, eighteen-year-old Martha König stumbled out of the woods "barefoot and exhausted," having been kidnapped by an "*Unhold*" armed with two revolvers; Emil Himmer was found dead earlier that same month in the "so-called Signal Woods" outside Plauen, near the barracks of the 134th Army Regiment.[25]

The fiends in the woods often worked by "leading" their victims there, which was the case with customs official "W.," who was led into

an ambush and attacked by four men, one of whom he shot in the head and killed.[26] The woods and fields were dangerous not only because they afforded cover for those seeking to hide but also because the scarcity of food and fuel during the war-time and revolutionary period continued to drive more people into them. It was for this reason that, in August 1920, during the hunt for the murderer Alfred Hübner, girls and women were warned away from the forest tracks, and asked not to collect berries or mushrooms unless accompanied by a man.[27]

It was the case of Alfred Hübner, in fact, that brought the danger of the woods into contact with the town, opened up a wider thematic catchment to include the destruction of families and harm to the wider community, and connected *these* to a sense of preternatural—or, at the very least, inhuman—malevolence. Hübner, a twenty-seven-year-old veteran and manual laborer from Treuen, a town of about ten thousand people ten miles west of Plauen, killed five people in August 1919. On August 1, Kurt Heine and his girlfriend, Anna Trampel, both nineteen years old, were found murdered in the woods outside Treuen. Heine had been shot twice in the back of the head and Trampel raped and killed. Suspicion immediately fell upon Hübner, who had been seen in the area, and a five-hundred-mark bounty put on his head. He eluded the authorities for three weeks, during which time he was believed to be ranging through the woods of the Vogtland and as far afield, some said, as Chemnitz, giving himself out as a forester named Brand. A description that was circulated about Hübner was of little help—he was "medium-sized, strong, and healthy-looking," with dark hair, a dark mustache, and a military coat—a common profile in 1919. Yet he seemed, also, vaguely animalistic: he was spotted, once, sitting in a tree eating cherries; his home in Treuen's *Dunkelgasse* (literally: "dark alley") was described as if it were a den (it was a "small, one-story house"); and when he finally retreated there at the end of August, it was hunger that was supposed to have driven him home.[28]

On August 26, 1919, Plauen's *Neue Vogtländischer Zeitung* announced that "the murderer Alfred Hübner, whose name alone brought terror to the entire Vogtland . . . is no more." The newspaper's narration of Hübner's last day on earth sounded themes that must have resonated profoundly with a community still dealing with the experience of war and defeat. He was, for one, well armed with a "Russian" carbine, two pistols, a dagger, and "an entire crate of ammunition." With this, he turned his little house—and by extension a piece of Treuen—into a "besieged fortress." The police responded in kind, attacking Hübner's house with hand grenades and a machine gun they had brought in from Auerbach, six miles away. To this scene was added the indiscriminate consequences of the war of materiel. In the firefight in the Dunkelgasse, Hübner's stray shots killed a neighbor, Frau Porsch, who was struck in the head, and wounded two

others: a five-year-old boy and another neighbor, Frau Hendel. At around 5 a.m. on August 25, his own house in flames, Hübner killed his wife, his seven-year-old son, and then himself. This completed his transformation. He was now a rapist, a homicide, an infanticide, and a suicide as well as a fugitive and imposter. To mark the wound he made in the community, the *Neue Vogtländischer Zeitung* reported that "several sobbing women" lined the narrow street as the bodies of Frau Porsch and Hübner's family were taken away; it noted, too, that Frau Hendel's husband, who had lost a leg in the war and only recently returned from a POW camp, suffered a stroke when told of her injury. Hübner, "the specter [*Schreckgespenst*] of the Vogtland," had destroyed five families in a domestic tableau of war violence, sexual assault, and murder.[29]

As the embodiment of "brutal bloodlust, cold-bloodedness, and dehumanization," the *Neue Vogtländischer Zeitung* argued, the "*Unhold* Hübner" had put the entire region under "pressure" (*Druck*).[30] In this case, the terms *Unhold*—a diabolical beast—and *Druck* suggest that Hübner had been inducted into a fund of associative knowledge about times of crisis and trauma built up over generations and transmitted through these very terms. As contemporary compendia of folk belief make clear, folk devils and fiends played a similar role in the moral imagination as Hübner. Take the *Alp*, for instance. One of the most evocative of spirits, it is ultimately a spirit of oppression (*Druck*), trauma, and illegibility that violated domestic boundaires. "The transformational capacity of the *Alp* is truly dream-like," one compendium reads; the *Alp* could be anything or anyone, and even appears as other spirits, like the "women of the fog" and "women of the rain" (*Nebel-* and *Regenfrauen*), who use their veils to lead travelers astray.[31] The *Alp* has access to every essential area of life, from the most intimate spaces to the spaces most strongly associated with production: the sleeping room, the kitchen (it can even appear as kitchen implements), and the barn. The violation of such spaces suggests the presence of a most thoroughgoing crisis. Indeed, effects associated with the visitations of the *Alp* put one in mind of the physiological and psychological effects of war, pestilence, and famine. When horses and other farm animals are under the power of an *Alp*, "they sweat and snort," appear bedraggled and exhausted, "and are marked with spots that cannot be rubbed away."[32]

Humans who are put under the power of the *Alp* are made to participate in acts that lead to injury, including such homegrown tortures as being made to grasp thorny plants by their stems, to cross turbulent bodies of water, to walk through fire, and to oppress others in these ways. There are, too, indications that *Alpe* bring sickness or, alternatively, appear during times of scarcity. Milk in the breasts of women plagued by *Alpe* dries up, and babies shrink down to the size of a thumb. The breasts of men, on the other hand, are known to swell and lactate: precisely the

effects observed by German doctors in veterans of the Great War thought to be suffering from neurasthenia.

It is this link with trauma that appears to be the most significant when dealing with the *Alp*, especially when it appears in light of the scholarly literature of our own time. Much like traumatic events themselves, the *Alp* produces silence, cutting the communication of pain and suffering by affecting one's ability to speak. When it attacks at night, in the bedchamber (the *Alp*'s preferred modus operandi), it "forces the sleeper's chest and throat together, so that he can neither draw air nor scream; it creeps around the sleeper from below, around the throat; or forces the sleeper's tongue down the throat." The primary methods of protection against the *Alp* further underscore the most important acts by which knowledge about the world is produced and trauma overcome: the acts of recognition and naming. The *Alp* yields only when its proper, human identity has been acknowledged and his or her "true human name" called out.[33]

Thus in a context of illegibility and moral alarm the importance of reportage, of the public "exposure" (*Entlarvung*) of spies and informers, of the construction of truth through association, and the location of dangerous elements along a moral continuum. Thus the placard placed on a house in Falkenstein in February 1921, addressed to "all former Red Guards," especially the "rogues," "villains," "thieves," "blackguards," and "swindlers," in the company of the "reprobate" and "spy" Johann Korte, which demanded that the community "pull them out of their hiding places" and "denounce them in every town."[34] Thus, too, the importance of shouting "Guten Tag, Herr Hölz!" when an odd man, obviously in disguise and in the company of two veiled women, is met at a crossroads at night.

III

It was out of this context that Hoelz emerged as both "a fact and a symbol," as Hugo Münsterberg might put it; it was into this context that Rettig's report ultimately placed him.[35] Some of the ties between Hoelz and the Vogtland's phantasmagoria were temporal: one of Richard Möckel's victims, in fact (eighteen-year-old Frieda Glaß), was found on April 4, 1920, the high point of Hoelz's insurrection of that year.[36] Others were thematic. Hoelz was likened, for instance, to Karl Stülpner and Johannes Bückler (also known as Schinderhannes), famous "robber captains" (*Räuberhauptmänner*) from the Napoleonic period, and to their own literary representations, like Rinaldo Rinaldini, created by colporteurs like Christian Vulpius and Karl May.[37] As such, he was approached as though he embodied a link to the Germanies and Germans of the past. Georg Grosz declared him to be "the last of the type that led the Peasant Revolution in the sixteenth century," an assessment that resonated with the popular conception that he inspired a "religious enthusiasm" (*Schwärmerei*)

in his supporters. A journalist at his trial in 1921 drew a different kind of temporal parallel: Hoelz was "a cross [*Mittelding*] between Neanderthal man and the suspicious jewel-hawker of the night café."[38] Ever the materialists, the Independent Socialists of Dresden's *Volkszeitung* saw in him the "Prussian-German non-commissioned officer," whose "limited mental horizon" made him the perfect vehicle for the Prussian Army's fabled "corpse-like obedience" (*Kadavergehörsamkeit*).[39] To others, he presaged the future. To his friend Georg Dittmar, he symbolized the revolution moving "at the tempo of an aeroplane" rather than that of "a bourgeois philistine [*Spießbürger*] out for a stroll."[40] As another sympathetic writer put it, Hoelz was "an energy"; to the Red Guard Karl Lehmann, he was "the man of the future."[41]

The most significant connection between Hoelz and the phantasmagoria of revolution, however, was his relationship to visibility and invisibility. The authorities found it impossible to pin him down, or to keep hold of him once he was caught—he managed, in fact, to elude capture from the spring of 1919 to the spring of 1921, crisscrossing Germany from Bavaria to Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt, Hannover, and Berlin. That he capitalized upon the perception that he was uncatchable—and that he enjoyed doing so—is obvious; that he depended upon intelligence provided by a large network of supporters is also clear. After soldiers had stopped and searched a wedding procession, believing Hoelz to be disguised as the bride, Hoelz sent clippings of his hair to the colonel in charge of apprehending him, with a note that read: "You've got the hair, now find the fellow it belongs to!"[42] The Vogtland's newspapers vilified him in absentia, not only because he escaped trial and punishment but because he had transformed absence itself into political power, typically by shattering it by "sudden bursts of presence."[43] In this way, he stymied attempts to force a coherence onto the revolutionary world: when, on March 16, 1920, Plauen's *Anzeiger* denounced Hoelz as an "invisible" "evil spirit" for his conspicuous absence from a trial of local insurrectionists, it simultaneously announced, in an adjacent section, that he was back in Falkenstein and "at work once again."[44] He had appeared in Falkenstein in the wake of the Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch to direct the insurrection that would become the "Hoelziade." Within a month, the army had managed to arrest all but a few of Hoelz's Red Guard; Hoelz, however, was nowhere to be found. The army found only his hat in an abandoned (and stolen) automobile, and subsequently a Hoelz who turned out to be an imposter.[45] Hoelz was indeed caught by Czechoslovakian border guards and put in prison, but he faked epilepsy and got himself transferred to a sanatorium. In August 1920, the German consul in Prague reported to his superiors that the Czechs had "lost his trail."[46]

It was at this time that the rumors and the sightings of Hoelz began in earnest. As early as May 1920, by which time the Czechs had

announced that Hoelz was in prison outside Prague, the police chief of Plauen asked Dresden for further military protection, since "Hoelz's diatribes" were "still showing their after-effects" in the Vogtland.[47] By midsummer, rumors of both his presence and imminent return were circulating among "the widest audiences."[48] An industrialist in Falkenstein received a "fire letter" (*Brandbrief*) written on red paper and signed by Hoelz.[49] Police in Frankfurt an der Oder reported that "sixteen or seventeen" people were on their way to Czechoslovakia to free Hoelz with the aid of rope ladders and a large sack of money.[50]

In late autumn, the season of the false Hoelz arrived. In November 1920, the *Dresdner Tageszeitung* reported that a manufacturer had been relieved of "several thousand Marks" by a man who stated that Hoelz was waiting with "three automobiles and thirty Red Guards at the next street corner." ("The same maneuver," the *Tageszeitung* continued, "was tried on other inhabitants of Dresden" by the same man.)[51] A housepainter named Richard Mackiol was arrested for sending "threat" and "extortion letters," signed with Hoelz's name, to industrialists in Plauen, threatening to "release the storm" if his demands were not met.[52] The most insistent false Hoelz turned out to be Hermann Dammer of Plauen, who shouted, upon being challenged on an industrialist's doorstep, "Let me be struck blind right here and now, if I'm not Hoelz!"[53]

Hoelz quite consciously played on his status as "the invisible one," effectively turning a source of anxiety and uncertainty into a source of political power and popularity. Just as his councils of the unemployed acted as organizational foils to the labor movement's workers' councils, so did his penchant for disguise and theatrics caricature the prevailing concern over falsehood, mistaken identity, and counterfeit. He changed his appearance constantly and had himself photographed doing it: as a bourgeois in Vienna in a suit with oiled and parted hair and glasses with nickel and gold rims; as the self-styled "dynamite assassin" with a chest-length beard, round glasses, and a long thick coat; as the "red general" of the left in command of the "March action" of 1921; and as a fugitive from the police, army, and Communist party, shorn of hair and allies, just before his capture in April 1921.[54] He also took pains to cultivate a stage presence at mass assemblies anchored in suspense and sleight of hand. Stories of his exploits—his escapes from stages, train cars, jailhouses, and police cordons, his intimidation of the army and civil authorities—were told again and again during the constant open-air meetings held during the Hoelziade. Ever the master of timing, Hoelz delayed his arrival and built up suspense while preliminary speakers told the stories that had made him famous. Arriving suddenly in a column of speeding cars, he stepped onto the stage, an image becoming a man.[55]

Just as important as the image he stepped into were the disguises that he stepped out of. During his two years of illegality, from the spring of

1919 to the spring of 1921, Hoelz gave speeches in horn-rimmed glasses as "Professor Lermontov" and antagonized other speakers as "Herr Möller." As "Professor Ivan Borovski," he promised the good *Bürger* of Werdau an informative lecture on the conditions in Russia, but stopped halfway through to note that "they're looking for a certain Max Hölz around here"; removing his glasses and his false beard, he declared that "in a word, that Max Hölz is me" and disappeared from the stage.[56] By unmasking *himself*—rather than wait for his political opponents to do so—Hoelz underscored a political message that was inseparable from his personality: that in this land of illusion and shadow, during the age of counterfeit, he alone was prepared to step out from behind his masks. By publicly casting off these masks, he demonstrated the difference between himself and his rivals, who were never prepared to admit that they wore masks at all. So adept at creating illusion, Hoelz was uniquely qualified to lead others through it, to show them what was true and what was false, to reveal a truth that was authenticated because it had been unmasked.

If the illusionist needs, above all, to know were illusion ends and reality begins, it seems that Hoelz was well qualified for the role. He was quite aware of the difference between himself and his image—they had different names, after all. The former was "Hoelz," as he spelled his last name, and the latter "Hölz," as the newspapers spelled it. "Hölz" was, at least in theory, a role that others could play if they had the proper qualifications. He said as much to his close comrade Georg Dittmar in a letter written in 1926. In a previous letter, Dittmar had asked after a mutual acquaintance, Max Rudert. "So you want to hear something about Rudert!" Hoelz replied. "I've already written to you about him, that he's a marvelously capable man. He would have the chance to become three times the Hölz I am, but it seems to me that he's got one serious defect. . . . He has . . . no feeling for the soul of the simple proletarian."[57]

That the sum of Hoelz + Hölz could add up to something like a third image that floated—magically—somewhere between reality and representation, seemed borne out in the summer of 1920, when a documentary film about the last days of the Hoelziade, called *The Dictator of the Vogtland*, was released in Berlin, Dresden, and other cities. Advertisements for the film proclaimed that it was "a document of the times," not merely because its subject was seen as a bellwether for revolution. Only film, one advertisement read, could deliver the "authenticated truth" about Hoelz, something "no newspaper reporters had managed to portray, despite their physical presence."[58] In this case, the "authenticated truth" seemed to refer, on the one hand, to film and photography as objective, "politically neutral" media, and, on the other hand, to what the Communist newspaper *Der Kämpfer* (The Fighter) once referred to as the "Hölz-delirium."[59] As Munich's *Film-Kurier* wrote, Hoelz was "every bit the 'film hero'"; the movie camera was "magically attracted to

him."[60] Even in this case, "magic" seemed ultimately to refer to his basic elusiveness. Was this film a documentary about a revolutionary much like a "film hero" or a movie about a "film hero" playing the role of a revolutionary? According to the *Berliner Tageszeitung*, watching Hoelz on film was like watching Hoelz "watch himself." As the *Film-Kurier* put it, "Hölz doesn't look directly into the camera, rather, he 'plays' a little bit, he laughs, he turns around and 'does Hölz.'"[61]

It is entirely possible that, in the eyes of some Vogtlanders, Hoelz's manipulations of visibility and invisibility, even his ability to place himself somewhere in between those things, suggested that he could do something that the state, for one, could not—take control of the Vogtland's dangerous woods, fields, and forest tracks. It was into the Vogtland's thick coniferous forests that Hoelz was always thought to go throughout 1919, his first year underground, to elude the military and police. It was into the Falkenstein *Stadtwald* (municipal forest) that Hoelz famously sent the poor and unemployed to cut and gather firewood in the autumn of 1919, an act that angered the town's middle class but won him the support of the poor.[62] Finally, it was by way of the forest roads that an eyewitness account of "hell night" claimed that Hoelz and the Red Guard made their way to the Czech border.[63]

Yet Rettig's reluctance to follow Hoelz and his companions across a dark field also suggests that, once the Hoelziade had passed, Hoelz entered a roster of fiends—Hübner, Möckel, and others—who haunted the woods in common. What made Hoelz available in this way, however, was not disguise or absence alone but the constant evidence of absence. The hat found in an abandoned car, the locks of hair in an envelope, and the vehement imposters turned that absence into a trace of the past ("Hoelz was here") and a presentiment of the future ("Hoelz will be among us again"). And while his absences turned him into a kind of free-floating category, his actions—arson, kidnapping, bombings, shootings, insurrection, and extortion—filled that category with content that was both ideological and emotional. He was an incarnation *and* a representation, a vessel for doing and thinking, a vehicle through which to identify, understand, capture, and even deploy the forces at work in the revolutionary world.

The authorities in Dresden, however, did not deal in incarnations. In response to Rettig's report, two state policemen, Jahn and Liebers, were dispatched to Falkenstein with orders to determine "what is fact and what is rumor." They found a community "gripped by a great nervousness" and by the conviction that Hoelz was in the area and about to reemerge. On the day of their arrival, Otto Rühle, an associate of Hoelz's, was scheduled to speak at the *Altes Schützenhaus*, the hall where Hoelz had held his first assemblies and from which he had directed his insurrections of 1919. "You heard people everywhere saying that Hoelz was definitely

coming to the meeting that night," Jahn wrote later, so he and Liebers decided to attend. Once seated in the packed hall, the audience started at every sound. One rumor had it that Hoelz would arrive wearing women's clothes, as he was always purported to do, or sneak in disguised, another well-known part of his repertoire. When a racket broke out on the upper floor, "everyone sprang out of their seats as if on command, and looked around for the source of the sound." Rühle took to the dais and calmed everyone down: the noise had been caused by some people crawling into the hall through some attic windows. "There weren't going to be any surprises tonight," Rühle reportedly told the crowd; "Max Hölz is not coming." But, he added, "it will not be long until he is among them again." At this, the moderator stood, and the entire hall "conveyed greetings to Max Hölz."[64]

Jahn and Liebers ultimately concluded that Hoelz's appearance was neither likely nor imminent: "factual evidence" of Hoelz's presence, their report read, "could never be brought forward." He had, on the contrary, popped up in the mail. In the course of their visit to Falkenstein, Jahn and Liebers learned that Hoelz's father-in-law had received a letter from a lawyer in Vienna: Hoelz's war-bride, Klara, had been arrested for attempting to cross the border without papers. "The way I hear it," the lawyer wrote, "Max is free and well cared for in Belgrade (Yugoslavia)." Considering this information "reliable," Jahn and Liebers concluded that "the rumors remain rumors." In the meantime, Rettig underwent a "serious examination" by the commissioner of the state police, and put it on record that he had "fabricated the case."[65]

IV

"It is not important to know the real things," Jean-Luc Godard said once, "but rather how things are real."[66] In an era when, as Eve Rosenhaft has written, "the authority of 'the truth'" itself was in crisis, the question of "how things were real" was of primary importance in determining the character of interwar political culture: any answer to that question constituted a claim about the parameters of reality and possible experience, and an attempt to create new sources of political power.[67]

This reformation of political culture during the interwar period is customarily approached in terms of the Weberian logic of "disenchantment." Detlev Peukert's précis of that logic, written in 1989, might just as well describe the present consensus on the Nazis' success: "The victory of the technical-scientific definition of the world over the old religious views of the world," Peukert wrote, "does not lead directly to the empire of reason about which the figures of the Enlightenment dreamed, but triggers a new wave of escapist movements into spheres beyond reason."[68] The rational, in other words, goes into crisis as soon as its "victory" over

the irrational is complete, "stable symbolic patterns" collapse, and "social fantasies" combine with "structures of religious expectation" to create a "*Führersuche*": a search for "the best of the *Volk*" who can "remystify" the world and deliver the nation from the "antimonies" of modern life.[69] Although scholars of the interwar period have long abandoned older, teleological accounts of the popularity of Nazism, it is clear that Adolf Hitler was among the beneficiaries of the new politics.

My account of the Vogtland in war and revolution highlights two major problems with this scenario. The first concerns the problematic duality between the "rational" and the "irrational." The "rational" is defined clearly enough, but the "irrational" seems to refer to a combination of emotional, religious, and psychological expectations and desires, which lend an allure to the candidates of the *Führersuche*.[70] It is, furthermore, rather difficult to isolate a vector through which the dynamic between the "rational" construction of propagandistic representation and its "irrational" reception might be said to work. At the moment, this seems to rely upon hazy notions of the "suggestive pull" (*suggestiver Sog*) of state-sponsored media, and the "unquestioned fascination" with which Germans at all levels of society approached film, photography, and ornamentalized mass display.[71] The second problem—that of historical agency—emerges directly out of this account of the attraction of mass media. Recent studies of republican mass media, including those undertaken as part of a revision of the general paradigm of crisis itself, have concentrated on the narrow band of political and media elites who select, shape, and publish the representations—of candidates for the *Führersuche*, of "crisis"—around which interwar political culture revolved. Based on these studies, consumers of mass media appear to be passive recipients of prepackaged (and overtly ideological) images and narratives, and their power to impose their own interpretations on visual and discursive components of the public sphere is more or less ignored.

More and more, scholars of early modern Europe have argued that an insistence upon the Weberian logic of disenchantment has obscured a broad, untidy zone of meaning production that crossed categories of experience and actively melded the ideal-typically rational with the ideal-typically irrational, making a separation between these two realms moot, and unproductive.[72] One way to conceptualize that zone of production is to adopt Richard Kieckhefer's notion of the "crossing point," which he uses to define magic but which works just as well to describe the "site" out of which the Vogtland's phantasmagoria emerged. The crossing point, for Kieckhefer, is a contested zone of cultural production "where religion converges with science, popular beliefs intersect with those of the educated classes, and the conventions of fiction meet with the realities of daily life."[73] The logic of the "crossing point," and the conceptual basis of the phantasmagoria in which Hoelz played such an important and active part, inhered

in association and analogy, tied to a way of seeing the world as a system of intelligible signs and signals pointing off toward some unity of experience and comprehension. The underlying assumption is that one need only interpret the world correctly for that unity to be descried. At one level, the point of this associative rationality, for those who employed it, lay in the identification of sources of harm, the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of social and moral bonds, the meaningful relation of the past and the present, and the translation of these findings into a symbolic language anchored in the experience of the community—what anthropologists have called "local logics of explanation."[74]

The bureaucratic, "technical-rational" state, represented by Jahn and Liebers, did indeed attempt to overrule this way of thinking, but the important distinction here does not lie along a rational–irrational fault line, but along the more prosaic boundary between the disciplinary agencies of the state and those who find themselves on the other end of it. Ultimately, the key to Hoelz's success—and, perhaps, of those who followed him, like Adolf Hitler—lay in his ability to confound such boundaries, rather than reinforce them. He did not, it turns out, reappear in the Vogtland that autumn—nor was he ever in Belgrade. Early in the morning of March 6, 1921, with barely a rumor to announce him, he declared his return by blowing a hole in the Falkenstein city hall with a bomb made out of dynamite and hand grenades.[75]

Notes

[1] *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 248, October 25, 1919.

[2] Houghton Library, Harvard University / bMS Ger 204 Fischer, Ruth / 2514, "Life and Death of Max Hoelz, the German Pancho Villa (1944)," 12.

[3] *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 63, March 16, 1920.

[4] Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (hereafter SHStAD) / 10717 Ministerium für Auswärtigen Angelegenheiten (hereafter MfAA) / 8501, "Hoelz und Genossen (Auslieferungen), 1920–1921," Polizeiamt Plauen to Justizministerium (Plauen, September 20, 1920), 118–118b.

[5] Clemens Ruthner, "Andererseits: Die deutschsprachige Phantastik des frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts in ihrem kulturhistorischen Kontext," in *Der Demiurg ist ein Zwitter: Alfred Kubin und die deutschsprachige Phantastik*, ed. Winfried Freund, Johann Lachinger, and Clemens Ruthner (Munich: Fink, 1999), 167.

[6] On "emotional communities," see Barbara Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 842. See also the discussion on reconstructing "textures of belonging" in Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 1–33. On emotions and historical processes, see Sophia Rosenfeld, "Thinking about Feeling, 1789–1799," *French Historical Studies* 32, no. 4 (2009): 697–706.

[7] Jarausch and Geyer, *Shattered Past*, 28.

[8] On gossip and rumor, see Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumours, and Gossip* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4–5, 8–9. On ghost sightings as manifestations of local "genealogies of the dead," see Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 46–84.

[9] Albrecht Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, *The War and German Society: The Testament of a Liberal* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1937), 19–20.

[10] On the revolution as an explosive "mobilization of interest," see Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 96–102, 114–22, as an "explosion of emotions" (*Gefühlsexplosion*), see Wilhelm Oeftering, *Der Umsturz 1918 in Baden* (Constance: Ruess und Itta, 1920), 165.

[11] Gustav Noske, *Von Kiel bis Kapp: Zur Geschichte der deutschen Revolution* (Berlin: Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1920), 11, 24.

[12] Ludwig Renn, *After War* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1931), 56, 65, 69; Max Seydewitz, *Es hat sich gelohnt zu leben: Lebenserinnerungen eines alten Arbeiterfunktionärs* (Berlin: Dietz, 1976), 70–71.

[13] Stadtarchiv Plauen / Polizeiamt / 42, "Nahrungsmitteluntersuchungsberichte usw., 1918–1921," Chemischer-Untersuchungsstelle Plauen i.V. to Polizeiamt, 1b (September 6, 1918), 55 (January 4, 1919), and 65 (February 5, 1919).

[14] *Neue Vogtländische Zeitung*, Nr. 193, August 21, 1919; Nr. 217, September 18, 1919; Nr. 188, August 14, 1920; Nr. 201, August 30, 1919; *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 121, May 28, 1918; Nr. 147, June 27, 1918; Nr. 286, December 11, 1919; Nr. 38, February 15, 1920; Nr. 69, March 24, 1920; Nr. 98, April 29, 1920; Nr. 240, October 14, 1920.

[15] *Neue Vogtländische Zeitung*, Nr. 269, November 17, 1918; Nr. 193, August 21, 1919; Nr. 217, September 18, 1919; Nr. 178, August 2, 1920.

[16] *Neue Vogtländische Zeitung*, Nr. 180, August 7, 1919; Nr. 188, August 14, 1920; *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 75, March 31, 1920.

[17] *Neue Vogtländische Zeitung*, Nr. 208, September 5, 1919; Nr. 214, September 14, 1919; Nr. 193, August 21, 1920; Nr. 200, August 29, 1920; *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 194, August 23, 1919; Nr. 271, November 23, 1919.

[18] *Volkszeitung für das Vogtland*, Nr. 67, March 21, 1920, clipped and archived in Stadtarchiv Plauen / Spezialinventar der Arbeiterbewegung / 177, "Polizeiamt der Stadt Plauen, Märzunruhen, 1920–1921," 24; *Volkszeitung für das Vogtland*, Nr. 291, December 12, 1920, clipped and archived in Stadtarchiv Plauen / Spezialinventar der Arbeiterbewegung / 176, "Kapp-Putsch, 1920–1921," 58; Bundesarchiv Freiburg / RH 53-4 Wehrkreiskommando IV / 175, "Darstellung der Ereignisse am 13. März 1920 und folgenden Tagen," Bericht, Reichswehr-Brigade XIX (Leipzig, March 30, 1920), 74; Max Hoelz, *Vom "Weissen Kreuz" zur Roten Fahne: Jugend-, Kampf- und Zuchthauserlebnisse* (Berlin: Malik-Verlag, 1929), 96.

[19] *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 45, February 23, 1919.

[20] *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 85, April 12, 1919; Nr. 105, May 9, 1919; Nr. 243, October 19, 1919; Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Chemnitz (hereafter

SStAC) / 30150 Staatsanwaltschaft beim Landgericht Plauen / 1773, "Strafsache gegen Johannes Kögler und andere wegen Landfriedensbruchs, 1919–1923," witness statement, 2:3, 6–7.

[21] *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 239, October 12, 1918; Nr. 230, October 2, 1920.

[22] *Neue Vogtländische Zeitung*, Nr. 98, April 30, 1919; Nr. 173, July 28, 1919; Nr. 193, August 20, 1920; *Leipziger Unabhängige Zeitung*, Nr. 44, February 22, 1921, clipped and archived in SHStAD / 10702 Staatskanzlei Nachrichtenstelle – Zeitungssausschnittsammlung (hereafter SNZ) / 652, unpaginated.

[23] *Neue Vogtländische Zeitung*, Nr. 101, May 4, 1919; Nr. 193, August 21, 1919; Nr. 200, August 29, 1919; Nr. 208, September 5, 1919; Nr. 214, September 14, 1919; Nr. 169, July 23, 1920; Nr. 193, August 20, 1920; Nr. 195, August 22, 1920; *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 127, June 4, 1918; Nr. 132, June 9, 1918; Nr. 194, August 23, 1919; Nr. 290, December 16, 1919.

[24] *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 239, October 12, 1918; Nr. 79, April 7, 1920; Schütz und Zetzsche, "Ein vielfacher Lustmörder und seine Entlarvung durch medizinische Indizienbeweise," *Archiv für Kriminologie* 74 (1924): 201–10.

[25] *Neue Vogtländische Zeitung*, Nr. 153, July 5, 1920; Nr. 173, July 28, 1920.

[26] *Neue Vogtländische Zeitung*, Nr. 195, August 22, 1920.

[27] *Neue Vogtländische Zeitung*, Nr. 184, August 12, 1919.

[28] *Neue Vogtländische Zeitung*, Nr. 178, August 5, 1919; Nr. 180, August 7, 1919; Nr. 184, August 12, 1919; Nr. 189, August 17, 1919; Nr. 196, August 25, 1919; Nr. 201, August 30, 1919.

[29] *Neue Vogtländische Zeitung*, Nr. 197, August 26, 1919.

[30] *Neue Vogtländische Zeitung*, Nr. 197, August 26, 1919.

[31] Adolf Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube der Gegenwart*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Wiegandt und Grieben, 1900), 273; Eduard Hoffmann-Krayer and Hanns Bächtold-Stäubli, eds., *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, 10 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1927–42), 4:525, 7:1214.

[32] Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube*, 274–76.

[33] Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube*, 276.

[34] *Leipziger Unabhängige Zeitung*, Nr. 44, February 22, 1921, clipped and archived in SHStAD / 10702 SNZ / 652, unpaginated.

[35] Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (New York: D. Appleton, 1916), 71.

[36] *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 79, April 7, 1920.

[37] *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 96, April 27, 1920; *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, Nr. 145, June 23, 1921, clipped and archived in SHStAD / 10702 SNZ / 652, unpaginated.

[38] Georg Grosz, *A Little Yes and a Big No: The Autobiography of Georg Grosz*, trans. Lola Sachs Dorin (New York: Dial Press, 1946), 203; *Der Kämpfer*, Nr. 26,

April 8, 1920; *Berliner Tageblatt*, Nr. 290, June 23, 1921, clipped and archived in SHStAD / 10702 SNZ / 652, unpaginated.

[39] *Unabhängige Volkszeitung von Dresden u. Pirna*, Nr. 147, June 27, 1921, clipped and archived in SHStAD / 10702 SNZ / 652, unpaginated.

[40] Bundesarchiv Berlin / NY 4051 Nachlass Max Hoelz / 22, "Kampf für die Freilassung von Max Hoelz aus dem Zuchthaus, 1922–1928," Georg Dittmar to Hoelz (May 4, 1923), 25.

[41] *Freie Presse*, Nr. 194, July 1, 1921, clipped and archived in SHStAD / 10702 SNZ / 652, unpaginated; *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 248, October 23, 1920.

[42] Hoelz, *Vom "Weissen Kreuz,"* 63, 66–67.

[43] The phrase is Tom Gunning's. See Gunning, "'Now You See It, Now You Don't': The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions," in *Silent Film*, ed. Richard Abel (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 76.

[44] *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 63, March 16, 1920.

[45] *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, Nr. 174, April 16, 1920; *Nationalzeitung*, Nr. 84, April 20, 1920.

[46] SHStAD / 10717 MfAA / 8501, "Hoelz und Genossen (Auslieferungen), 1920–1921," Abschrift (Dresden, September 17, 1920), 101; Hoelz, *Vom "Weissen Kreuz,"* 128.

[47] SHStAD / 10736 Ministerium des Innern / 11237, "Sicherheitsverhältnisse in den Großstädten und auf dem platten Lande, 1917–1920," Polizeiamt Plauen to Ministerium des Innern (Plauen, May 3, 1920), 226.

[48] SHStAD / 10717 MfAA / 8501, Justizministerium to MfAA (Dresden, October 19, 1920), 113.

[49] *Chemnitzer Tageblatt*, Nr. 107, April 17, 1920, clipped and archived in SStAC / 30040 Kreishauptmannschaft Zwickau / 1092, "Zeitungsauschnitte zu den Unruhen März 1920," 31.

[50] SHStAD / 10717 MfAA / 8501, Auswärtiges Amt (Reich) to MfAA (Berlin, June 30, 1920), 39.

[51] *Dresdner Tageszeitung*, Nr. 251, November 26, 1920, clipped and archived in SHStAD / 10702 SNZ / 652, "Prozeß gegen den Kommunisten Max Hölz," unpaginated.

[52] *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 98, April 28, 1921.

[53] *Vogtländischer Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 294, December 17, 1920.

[54] For reproductions of these photographs, see Hoelz, *Vom "Weissen Kreuz,"* inserts between 160–61, 176–77.

[55] Elisabeth Helbig to Karin Kramer Verlag (November 26, 1992) quoted in Peter Gierisch and Bernd Kramer, eds., *Max Hoelz: Sein Leben und sein Kampf* (Berlin: Karin Kramer Verlag, 2000), 33–34; Hoelz, *Vom "Weissen Kreuz,"* 69–70, 73–74, 77, 82, 84–85; SHStAD / 11120 Staatsanwaltschaft beim Landgericht Dresden (hereafter StA LG-D) / 2309, "Lengenfeld in der Zeit der Hölz-Ära," Polizeiwache Lengenfeld, April 19, 1920, 3b–4.

[56] Walter Reinhardt quoted in Gierisch und Kramer, *Max Hoelz*, 35; Wilhelm Eildermann, *Als Wanderredner der KPD unterwegs: Erinnerungen an die ersten Jahre der KPD 1919–1920* (Berlin: Dietz, 1977), 64–66.

[57] Bundesarchiv Berlin / NY 4051 Nachlass Max Hoelz / 22, Hoelz to Georg Dittmar (July 1, 1926), 81 (emphasis removed).

[58] *Nachrichtenblatt und Anzeiger für Johanngeorgenstadt und Umgegend* (June 8, 1920), clipped and archived in SHStAD / 11120 StA LG-D / 2312/2, "Hölz-Ära im Vogtland," 2:4; on advertisements in Berlin, see clipping from unnamed newspaper announcing a screening of *Der Diktator des Vogtlandes* at Richard-Oswald Lichtspiele in Berlin-Charlottenburg in SHStAD / 11120 STA LG-D /2312/2, "Hölz-Ära im Vogtland," 2:14b. Unfortunately, *The Dictator of the Vogtland* is no longer extant.

[59] *Volkszeitung für Meißen*, Nr. 178, August 1, 1928, clipped and archived in SHStAD / 10702 SNZ / 652, unpaginated.

[60] *Film-Kurier*, Nr. 70, April 7, 1920.

[61] *Film-Kurier*, Nr. 70, April 7, 1920; *Berliner Tageszeitung*, April 25, 1920, clipped and archived in SHStAD / 11120 StA LG-D / 2312/2, 2:12.

[62] Fischer, "Life and Death of Max Hoelz," 8–9.

[63] *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, Nr. 168, April 13, 1920; this account also appeared in the *Vossische Zeitung*, Nr. 187, April 12, 1920.

[64] SHStAD / 10717 MfAA / 8501, Justizministerium to MfAA (Dresden, October 19, 1920), 113–17.

[65] SHStAD / 10717 MfAA / 8501, Justizministerium to MfAA (Dresden, October 19, 1920), 113–17.

[66] Godard quoted in James Monaco, *The New Wave: Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 191.

[67] Eva Rosenhaft, "Lesewut, Kinosucht, Radiotismus: Zur (geschlechter-)politischen Relevanz neuer Massenmedien in den 1920er Jahren," in *Amerikanisierung: Traum und Alptraum im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Alf Lüdtke, Inge Marssolek, and Adelheid von Saldern (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996), 119.

[68] Detlev Peukert, *Max Webers Diagnose der Moderne* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 60.

[69] Thomas Mergel, "Führer, Volksgemeinschaft und Maschine: Politische Erwartungsstrukturen in der Weimarer Republik und dem Nationalsozialismus 1918–1939," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, *Sonderheft* 21 (2005), 96.

[70] Mergel, "Führer, Volksgemeinschaft und Maschine," 110; Stanley Sowers, "The Concepts of 'Religion,' 'Political Religion,' and the Study of Nazism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 9 (2007): 17.

[71] Bernd Weisbrod, "Die Politik der Repräsentation—Das Erbe des Ersten Weltkrieges und der Formwandel der Politik in Europa," in *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die europäische Nachkriegsordnung. Sozialer Wandel und Formveränderung der Politik*, ed. Hans Mommsen (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000), 30; Detlev Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik: Krisenjahre der Klassischen Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987), 163.

[72] Alexandra Walsham, "The Reformation and 'The Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed," *Historical Journal* 51, no. 2 (2008): 497–528.

[73] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (1989; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1–2. Todd Herzog has seen the "crossing point" at work in the popular literary culture of the Weimar Republic as well. See his excellent *Crime Stories: Criminalistic Fantasy and the Culture of Crisis in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn, 2009), esp. 3–7.

[74] Stewart and Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumours*, 8. See also Eva Labouvie, *Zauberei und Hexenwerk: Ländlicher Hexenglaube in der frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1991), 257–65, which argues that the "social logic" of witch-belief was fundamentally connected to material culture, and hence declined when poor relief and other social welfare measures appeared in the countryside.

[75] SStAC / 30150 Staatsanwaltschaft beim Landgericht Plauen / 1759, "Strafverfahren gegen Max Hoelz und andere wegen Verbrechens gegen das Sprengstoffgesetz, 1920–1935," Oberstaatsanwalt beim Landgericht Plauen to Justizministerium (Plauen, March 7, 1921), unpaginated.

4: Siegfried Kracauer, Spirit, and the Soul of Weimar Germany

Jared Poley

Monica Black and Eric Kurlander explain in the introduction to this volume that "there has been no shortage of material over the decades suggesting a close connection between Nazism and the occult." I seek in this essay to examine the historical roots of this claim through an analysis of the work of Siegfried Kracauer (1889–1966), the famed essayist and film critic. Kracauer asserted in his classic 1947 work *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* that there was an important but unstated connection revealed in the cultural artifacts produced in the Weimar period between the manic horror of the Weimar years and the horrible manias of the Third Reich.[1] If Kracauer is correct, that means that reexamining the links between Weimar culture, especially when it centers on the fantastic, grotesque, and occult, and the implementation of a fascist politics after 1933, is essential to writing the cultural history of Nazism.

Kracauer's thesis is especially important for its demand that we investigate the Weimar period—its mass fantasies and their political expressions—if we want to understand Nazism and its relationship to spirituality, for his analysis of mass culture is in some fashion an occult study: the reading of esoteric signs for deeper knowledge and meaning. There are three related areas in connection with Kracauer's thesis that we consider in this essay. The first traces Kracauer's arguments in *From Caligari to Hitler*. The second probes his Weimar era essays for his thoughts on the status of spirituality (and its connection to occult movements like anthroposophy) during the Weimar Republic. The third examines Kracauer's position on mass culture and what it might tell us about the covertly expressed desires of Germans in the period before the ascension of Hitler to the chancellery.

One way of understanding Kracauer's diagnosis of Weimar culture and its connections to the later development of and attraction to Nazism is to consider his account of spirituality. The occult remains a somewhat foggy term for Kracauer, who more consistently discussed "spirituality," yet the dynamic remained visible to him as a set of inchoate emotions that

could find expression in the political realm. Indeed, the issue of spirituality or its absence in the years leading up to 1933 was a critical problem for Kracauer and generates its own field of analysis that lets us consider how he perceived the connections between mass culture and the ways that political and spiritual leaders could marshal mass political expressions on the part of the German people. While the question of whether or not the Weimar period saw an accelerated interest in the occult is one that we do not seek to answer at this point, we do seek to understand how these ideas fit together for Siegfried Kracauer in interesting ways. We trace in this essay how Kracauer's view of the political-cultural nexus—especially as it corresponded to the larger question of spirituality and its political manifestations—developed over the course of the Weimar Republic, through his experiences in exile, and into the postwar period.

Siegfried Kracauer, born in 1889, was trained in engineering and worked as an architect until joining the editorial staff of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in August 1921.[2] His work for the paper was largely made up of short essays and works of criticism. He collected many of his feuilleton together, publishing them under the title *The Mass Ornament* in 1927. He fled to exile (an act that also precipitated his dismissal from the increasingly right-leaning *Frankfurter Zeitung*) in 1933, first to Paris and then in 1941 to New York City. He remained in the United States until his death in 1966. Kracauer was connected to the larger German émigré community, and he had close personal connections to the Frankfurt School of thinkers: Walter Benjamin (with whom he shared his exile in France), Theodor Adorno (who credited Kracauer with introducing him to Kant), and Max Horkheimer.

If we wish to understand how the Nazi period was perceived from a close historical vantage point, Siegfried Kracauer presents a good opportunity to do so. *From Caligari to Hitler*, after all, represents one of the earliest attempts to diagnose the pathologies of National Socialism by locating the etiology of the disease in the culture of the Weimar Republic. While there is much to fault in the thesis of the book, most notably Kracauer's constant attempts to read the historical record backward, film historian Leonardo Quaresima's flat demand that "*From Caligari to Hitler* deserves to be reread" is good advice.[3] *From Caligari to Hitler* has fascinated scholars and the reading public alike since its publication in 1947. Historian of film Dagmar Barnouw explains that *From Caligari to Hitler* is "the most widely known and, on the whole, least satisfying work. . . . It exhibits some of the more important fallacies that can trap the historian."[4] That said, Kracauer presented a bold thesis in the book, which came about in part as the result of a proposition from Max Horkheimer that Kracauer exploit the Museum of Modern Art collection of German cinema as a way of gaining entry into the United States, embarking on a project oriented around "studying, on the basis of the

available materials, the relationship between social development and cinema in Germany."[5] The drafting of the book was carried out beginning in 1938 and was reworked throughout the course of the Second World War before appearing in print in 1947.[6]

Kracauer argues in *From Caligari to Hitler* that the German film industry, established by the government during the *Kaiserreich* to support the war effort, was reestablished after 1918 as a group of public entities that nonetheless maintained links to previous iterations. He views the German film and culture industry as forming a continuity to pre–First World War and wartime propaganda. While Kracauer avoided discussing the exilic culture industries because he focused his attention on a strictly national context, he traces the development of the German film industry from its origins before the First World War, through the war, over the course of the early 1920s, during the "Golden Age" formed during the years 1924–29, and then into the "pre-Hitler" period. The films produced during the Weimar Republic, in his estimation, provide a clear window on the national mood of Germans, and the mass culture of the Weimar period should be seen as indicative of things to come. Following Kracauer, the fact that so much of Weimar cinema was thematically oriented around the occult, around the weird, around horror, around sadism and around violence indicates that in a larger sense Germans were driven by predilections similar to those that came to be expressed in Nazism.

Kracauer argues that prewar films like *Student from Prague* (1913), *The Golem* (1915), *Homunculus* (1916), or *The Other* (1913) indicated a crisis in German selfhood. The themes of those films—splitting, doubles, creatures controlled from without, and so on—reveal to Kracauer the conflicts arising from a delayed or incomplete bourgeois revolution. Because the first studios in the German film industry were established during the First World War for the purpose of being able to "mold public opinion," we see indications of the close connection between culture, mass culture, and authority from the outset.[7] Kracauer notes that what he calls the "Shock of Freedom" that Germans experienced after the war was expressed first in a wave of sex films, but then the reality of the catastrophic end of the war and of the "starvation blockade" set in, and chaos reigned.

This sense of crisis was made manifest in *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1920), which exposed the twin poles of authority and chaos as the ones that drove the German public's attempt to negotiate the traumatic first years of the peace. These competing themes in *Caligari*—the fear of chaos finding resolution in the search for authority—were then reiterated in later productions like *Nosferatu* (1922) and *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* (*Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler*, 1922), which Kracauer together calls a series of "tyrant films" that indicate the fear of chaos in the early 1920s was definitively worked out in favor of authority. A subsidiary

theme organized around an attempt to understand how destiny or fate operated again rejected chaos in favor of agency. The upshot, Kracauer believes, was that Germans preferred to submit to authority rather than to accept continuing uncertainty and chaos. As the Weimar Republic stabilized, these themes replicated, and with a shift in technique from studio films to ones emphasizing realism, the German film industry reproduced a set of attitudes that not only expressed the inner desires of the German public but also actively shaped those thoughts as well.

Kracauer's analysis of *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* is unsurprisingly a central feature of his argument, and one that has been attacked especially roughly as new evidence about the production process of the film has come to light. Nonetheless, Kracauer's ideas about the film—and his treatment of it as evidence of larger attitudes and dispositions—remain important if we are to understand how Kracauer saw in the film proof of German desires that culminated in fascism. *Caligari*, Kracauer suggests, centers on "the soul wavering between tyranny and chaos."[8] Faced with the traumas recently experienced in Germany—the war, the starvation blockade, the influenza pandemic, the violent political chaos of civil war and *Putsch*—Germans experienced a type of destructive collapse. While this is not a novel interpretation of the first years of the Weimar Republic, Kracauer does argue that this pervasive sense of doom found that expression in films like *Caligari* also resonated later in the hopes of the German public as the country once again slid into chaos in the first years of the global Depression. Kracauer locates the success of the Nazis in the psychological turmoil of the Weimar years, explaining, "It is a puzzling spectacle: on the one hand, the Germans were reluctant to give Hitler the reins; on the other, they were quite willing to accept him. Such contradictory attitudes frequently spring from a conflict between the demands of reason and emotional urges. Since the Germans opposed Hitler on the political plane, their strange preparedness for the Nazi creed must have originated in psychological dispositions stronger than any ideological scruples."[9] The upshot, as Kracauer more succinctly put it at the end of the book, was that Weimar culture somehow predicted the Nazis: "It was all as it had been on the screen."[10] Even the earliest films of the Weimar years contained the germ of Nazism, and the Nazis were nothing more than the political expression of Weimar culture. The public fascination with *Caligari*—the fact that Germans not only produced but also consumed the film—provided Kracauer with evidence that the flowers of evil that bloomed after 1933 had been planted more than a decade before.

Occult films from the early years of the Weimar Republic filled an important role for Kracauer in his analysis of the cultural antecedents of Nazism. We should not lose sight of the fact that the films that Kracauer isolated as being especially important indications of the German character were—at their heart—centered on occult themes. *Das Cabinet of Dr.*

Caligari, which received special attention from Kracauer in his book, contains elements of hypnotism and insanity, and the murderous actions of the somnambulant Cesare were understood by Kracauer to be an expression of a German flight to authority. "Like the Nazi world," Kracauer explains, "that of *Caligari* overflows with sinister portents, acts of terror and outbursts of panic."[11] The film equates "horror and hopelessness"; it projects a world in which the "normal is a madhouse," one ruled by "sadism" and governed by an "appetite for destruction."[12] These elements, together, were nothing less than the core of the "German collective soul."[13]

Other films from the period that drew Kracauer's attention—*Nosferatu*, *Dr. Mabuse*, and *Waxworks* (1924)—were similarly centered on occult themes. *Nosferatu* deals with the presence of the undead in a previously harmonious community; the plot of *Dr. Mabuse* revolves around hypnotism and the absence of will; *Waxworks* imagines the animation of a wax figure—Jack the Ripper—after tracing macabre stories about Ivan the Terrible and Harun al-Rashid. Thematically, then, the occult figured heavily in early Weimar cinema. Kracauer reads this emphasis on occult themes as an indication that the traumas of the war were felt so intensely by Germans that a mass flight to the occult and a search for a reinvigorated authority—Kracauer emphasizes the tyrannical—characterized German culture between 1919 and 1924.

Still, the thematic preoccupation with the occult expressed by the German filmmakers that Kracauer features in his argument do not tell the whole story. The stylistic conventions of expressionism, perhaps a perfect vehicle for occult themes, were for Kracauer also significant indications of the occult origins of Nazism. Expressionism, Kracauer asserts in *From Caligari to Hitler*, "had the function of characterizing the phenomena on the screen as phenomena of the soul."[14] The conflation of style and content was so strong, in fact, that Kracauer saw *Caligari* as an expression of the German "soul at work." Kracauer presented this suite of films—couched in the language of the soul, expressing a morbid fascination with the occult, and stylistically jarring—to be the public expressions of the subterranean wishes of Germans. Writing in the 1940s, these clues to the psychic disposition of Germans twenty years before were uncannily connected to the disaster of Nazism. Kracauer relates the views of Count Etienne de Beaumont, who told Caligari director Hans Janowitz that his film was as "fascinating and abstruse as the German soul," and that its voice spoke the occult language of the twentieth century: violence, dread, horror, the unseen. "Now the time has come for the German soul to speak . . . we are waiting for what you have to impart to us, to the world."[15] Sadly enough, the occult films of the early Weimar years, at least in Kracauer's view, spoke the language of fascism.

Kracauer's diagnosis of the origins of the fascist disease being located in the fever swamps of Weimar culture invites a larger attempt

to understand how Kracauer analyzed the despair of the Weimar period. Kracauer was an astute observer of German life and culture, and because of that, his essays from across the span of the Weimar Republic offer us a way to see some of the deeper elements of Weimar culture that he would later say contributed to the rise of fascism. One of the most significant factors that drew Kracauer's attention centers on the feeling of spiritual despair that many Germans experienced after the war, a problem that he worked out in six essays published between 1921 and 1931. Together these essays provide an important window into the ways that Kracauer's thinking developed over the course of the Weimar years, only to reemerge in his postwar treatments like *From Caligari to Hitler*. Thomas Levin, the editor of the volume of Kracauer essays titled *The Mass Ornament*, indicates that Kracauer was preoccupied through the mid-1920s with the "'transcendental homelessness' of this age, offering a material phenomenology of the 'vacuum of faithlessness' which [Kracauer argues] characterizes the modern world."[16] Levin's insight on how the gravitational pull of spiritlessness exerted an influence on Kracauer and his analysis of German culture is an exciting one (although the evidence suggests to me that this force field did not drop away in the mid-1920s but continued to be felt). The spiritual "vacuum" that Kracauer believed Germans experienced during the 1920s could then be filled with a range of mystical movements from consumerism to anthroposophy to fascism that provided some sense of relief or spiritual satisfaction.

Kracauer first addressed the problem of spiritlessness in German culture in an essay titled "Catholicism and Relativism" (*Frankfurter Zeitung*, November 19, 1921). The essay mainly concerns itself with an analysis of Max Scheler's *On the Eternal in Man*, but Kracauer does include a frank image of what he perceives the status of religion in Germany to be at the time. "These days," Kracauer writes, "despair over the alienation from God joins a religious impoverishment that is vastly greater than any known in earlier times. People today are striving to find an entrance to religious belief, but in general are able to achieve this goal only through a mindset that manifests more a will to believe than belief itself."[17] The essay winds up with the claim that Scheler's ideas can be chalked up to a pervasive lack; citizens of the Weimar republic exist in a time when the "spiritual condition of an era that is only just beginning to realize all it is lacking."[18] The politics of cultural despair would come later. In late 1921 Kracauer was witnessing the politics of spiritual despair.

These themes reappeared in a more extended form the following spring in an essay titled "Those Who Wait" (*Frankfurter Zeitung*. March 12, 1922). Kracauer notes most explicitly in the essay the feeling that Germans suffered a spiritual "emptiness" that was characterized by the "*emptying out* of people's spiritual/intellectual space."[19] Kracauer asserts that people suffered from their "*exile* from the religious sphere."[20] Worse

still, this emptiness, or maybe more precisely the fear of feeling empty, generated an unbearable sense of lack: "*Horror vacui*—fear of emptiness—governs" them.[21] This spiritual vacuum, generated by a long process of secularization (the "self tears itself away from its attachment to God, and slips away from the constraints of a community established by church authority, tradition, statutes, and dogma"), has culminated in a society completely unmoored from tradition.[22] But rather than seeing in this critique the familiar conservative lament about modernity and its differences from the past, we should instead consider the ways that this diagnosis of the emptiness of the Weimar soul that Kracauer so astutely recognized in fact allowed for a set of new spiritual alternatives to be expressed. Instead of seeing evidence of spiritual disconnection and secularization, we see instead the open space—the void or vacuum—that could be filled by the search for a new spirituality. Germans, in Kracauer's estimation, sought various ways to fill the relentless void left by the absence of authentic religion, and one way of accomplishing that was through a sequence of alternative religions, fads, and politics. Kracauer identified Rudolf Steiner and anthroposophy as one way to fill the void; he saw Communism as another; and Nazism as yet another.

Kracauer noted that another way to fill this spiritual void was through mass culture, and especially a mass culture that projected all sorts of authoritarian images. Kracauer saw *Caligari*, for instance, as a film that reveled in the power of authority. The advance publicity campaign for the film told audiences that they "must become Caligari," a celebration of authority that was even found in the reactions to the film of left-wing political parties, which, in Kracauer's view, "preferred to pass off authority itself as a paragon of progressive virtues."[23] Kracauer's diagnosis of spiritual malaise finding satisfaction in authority was expressed in numerous ways in his analysis of *Caligari*, and never more directly than his blunt assertion that "Caligari exposes the soul wavering between tyranny and chaos." The "sadism" and "appetite for destruction" apparent in the film "once more testifies to their prominence in the German collective soul."[24] Significantly, *Caligari* was merely the avant-garde of a larger "procession of tyrants" parading through German cinemas. Kracauer saw *Nosferatu*, *Vanina* (1922), *Dr. Mabuse*, and *Waxworks* as evidence of a deeply felt connection to tyranny on the part of German audiences. When God is dead, Kracauer seems to say, we get human political authority in its place. If people "are suffering from their exile from the religious sphere; that is, they are suffering from the enormous alienation prevailing between their spirit/intellect and the absolute," then many sought to alleviate the pain caused by a spiritual absence with an unacknowledged desire for strong leaders and other tough guys.[25] Kracauer makes clear that the pain—the "despair"—of spiritlessness drives a desperate search for new forms of spirituality: "These people stagger into one religious realm or another,

happy to be relieved from their tiresome rambling and under the delusion that this homecoming terminates their wanderings on almost as happy a note as a novel that ends with a betrothal."[26]

This desperate search for spiritual meaning generated in Kracauer's mind a set of conditions in which people would find themselves attracted to the occult. The films that drew his attention certainly indicate one way that this process could play out. But Kracauer was equally concerned with the burgeoning attraction of spiritualities that operated in part on occult foundations. He notes, for instance, that the search for "new homeland of the soul" found resolution in popular attraction to Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy.[27] Kracauer notes the dubious nature of Steiner's movement, and explains its rapid growth in the interwar period as being a function of Steiner's

> claim—based on his insight into the untenability of our spiritual/intellectual situation—to have a scientifically verifiable method that allegedly will enable people to perceive supersensory realities as well as fathom human destiny; he gives the deceptive impression that his method establishes secure connections to the absolute. Now, isn't it tempting to set foot on this illusory bridge spanning the gap between science and religion and thereby be permitted without *sacrificium intellectus* to believe in and, yes, even understand a good many miraculous things?[28]

When Germans began viewing the occult generally, and movements like anthroposophy specifically, as being able to offer genuine (and even "scientific") solutions to problems, anything might be possible.

The rootlessness of German culture in the early 1920s remained a problem. And in hindsight, too, Kracauer saw in Steiner an awful indication of things to follow. Writing in *From Caligari to Hitler*, Kracauer revisited Steiner once again, this time seeing the founder of the Waldorf method as a harbinger of fascism who preyed upon the desires of Germans for some sort of spiritual authenticity only to have those desires filled by something much worse. "In their dread of being left in the open," Kracauer explains, "scores of people rushed to mushroom prophets, who were to sink into oblivion a few years later. The theosophist Rudolf Steiner was a particular rage of the time; he resembled Hitler in that he zealously advertised inflated visions in execrable, petty-bourgeois German."[29] Steiner, with his gestures toward the "spiritual-scientific" and his occult musings on the transmigrations of the soul, represents an interesting choice when Kracauer reads the historical record backward. Anthroposophy, which borrowed as much from Goethe and Nietzsche as it did from an appropriated understanding of Hinduism, provided a way to marry Western spiritualities to Eastern religions. When Kracauer asserts

a functional similarity between the mystical Hitler and the "mushroom prophet" Steiner, he was doing more than making a pregnant observation about the equally bankrupt qualities of the movements these two men crafted: he was also commenting on the spiritual malaise experienced by Germans after 1918 that could be satisfied by the irrational embodied in forceful leaders. Indeed, it was the manner that these leaders filled the spiritual void that attracted Kracauer's analytical eye again and again beginning in the early 1920s.

The crisis of spirituality that Kracauer sensed operating in Germany in 1922 remained present throughout the decade. In his essay "Travel and Dance" (March 15, 1925), Kracauer noted the ways that all sorts of popular entertainments had taken on spiritual dimensions. "Travel and dance have taken on a *theological* significance: they are the essential possibilities through which those in the grip of mechanization can live (albeit inauthentically) the double existence that is the foundation of reality."[30] And even more surprising, if the theological could be found in the gyrations of dancehall, religion itself had perhaps become emptied of spiritual content. In his essay "The Bible in German" (April 26 and 28, 1927), Kracauer deals with what he calls the problem of "religious renewal" in Germany and the difficult distinction between sacred and profane. "These days, despair over the alienation from God joins a religious impoverishment that is vastly greater than any known in earlier times. People today are striving to find an entrance to religious belief, but in general are able to achieve this goal only through a mindset that manifests more a *will to believe* than belief itself."[31]

Ultimately the destruction of the spiritual or the repetitive and hollow expressions of spirituality in Weimar Germany took on the characteristics of a process of demystification of the past. Kracauer explains in his 1927 essay "Mass Ornament" that the "process of history is a battle between a weak and distant reason and the *forces of nature* that ruled over heaven and earth in the myths."[32] In the absence of a self-aware form of reason, there is a return to old forms of thought. "After the twilight of the gods," Kracauer writes, "the gods did not abdicate: the old nature within and outside man continues to assert itself. It gave rise to the great cultures of humanity, which must die like any creation of nature, and it serves as the ground for the superstructures of a mythological thinking which affirms nature in its omnipotence."[33]

When spirit disappears, when science no longer provides answers, mythological and occult thinking arise in their place. In a world with neither religion nor science, the coded symbols of myth act as substitutes for critical thought. The logical outcome of such a system of nonthought and antispirit was fascism. The vacuum of spirit and the descent into irrationalism culminated in habits of mind disconnected from rationality. In his essay from December 1931 titled "The Revolt of the Middle Classes,"

Kracauer expresses his concern about the decline of rationalism, the absence of spirit, and the growth of fascism: "It still remains to be established to what degree the so-called fascist myth is not simply the ideological superstructure of specific material and social relations and whether it could survive solely on the basis of its own irrational strength."[34]

We see in these essays written by Kracauer in the 1920s and early 1930s a recurring concern with spiritual malaise. The vacuum created by the disappearance of spirituality after the First World War was filled by the occult, by theosophy, by horror. The "twilight of the gods" was replaced by new forms of authority that took their power from their status as expressions of mass desire. What remains to be seen, however, is how the presumed spiritlessness of the 1920s proliferated in the context of the development of a narcotizing mass culture, and how these twin processes helped generate in Germans a lack of critical ability that found resolution in antidemocratic policies. If, as Kracauer came to believe by 1947, the "Nazi soul" could be found gestating in Weimar culture, we need to turn our attention to the ways that Kracauer developed his understanding and critique of mass culture and what that culture might be thought to say about larger historical and political contexts.

Kracauer is often criticized for making the argument in *From Caligari to Hitler* that a study of mass culture provides clues as to the political decision making (or fantastical wish fulfillment that politics represents), but his essays from the Weimar period demonstrate that this was not a new idea in 1947. Kracauer's thesis in *Caligari* raises important questions about what might be called "cultural flow." Kracauer never articulated the problem in this fashion, but we can see his assumption at work that ideas and cultural attitudes are imposed upon people, and cultural attitudes could be read from the production and reception of cultural artifacts. Kracauer typically maintained a fairly transparent relationship between the artifacts generated by a culture, and what those artifacts revealed about the innermost thoughts and desires of people living in a particular culture.

Few today hold such a view, but the larger question that he asked—can we come to some knowledge of a society by studying its cultural products?—remains critically important to this day. We may not agree on what Hollywood's focus on comedies and romances in the 1930s says about the United States in the wake of the Great Depression, but there is consensus that it says something. Kracauer was confident that culture could be used to understand the larger dimensions of attitude and concern. "Films," he argued in his 1927 essay "The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies," "are the mirror of the prevailing society."[35] We can see in Kracauer's essays from the 1920s his attempt to create a method appropriate to cultural history. He saw evidence of a "national soul" exhibited in mass culture. Kracauer sought to analyze cultural changes and to develop a critical theory that represented a sustained effort to apply scientific

methods to the study of culture. Making culture speak, Kracauer developed ways to analyze the links—especially the historical ones—between culture and behavior.

Kracauer began to work on the problem of cultural change, and what those changes might signify, in his August 1922 essay "The Group as the Bearer of Ideas." The first problem was to understand where culture exists, to identify how ideas operated in a larger social context. Groups, Kracauer asserted, were particularly significant because groups are the ones which in a way bore culture: "There is absolutely no spiritual expression that is able to exist simply on its own, without being enmeshed in a large context of meaning. It always wells up from some ultimate convictions and always leads to other expressions, with which it combines to form a homogenous, meaningful whole."[36] We see here evidence of how Kracauer wrestled with the problem of cultural production and reception. Much of his argument about the quality of the national soul revolves around his ability to read the attitudes of the group through the cultural objects it consumes, and therefore cultural consumption should be seen as offering Kracauer clues to larger attitudes. Asserting, as he did in "The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies" (March 1927), that film is a "mirror" of society, Kracauer was then able to suggest that production and reception were essentially conjoined problems. The fact that a cultural artifact exists provides important clues about reception. Films, Kracauer believes, "are financed by corporations, which must pinpoint the tastes of the audience at all costs in order to make a profit."[37] The market dictates messages in the search for corporate profit. "Stupid and unreal film fantasies are the *daydreams of society* in which its actual reality comes to the fore and its otherwise repressed wishes take on form."[38] Cultural artifacts not only express the inner thoughts of the people who consume them, but then those elements also exert constitutive force over audiences: culture is a mirror of society, but it also helps shape that society and its tastes.

The meaningfulness of mass culture in its historical dimension is one of the problems that Kracauer circles around in "The Mass Ornament," discussed above. Indeed, culture provides perhaps the best way to understand deeper historical contexts. Kracauer explains in the essay that the "position that an epoch occupies in the historical process can be determined more strikingly from an analysis of its inconspicuous surface-level expressions than from that epoch's judgments about itself. Since these judgments are expressions of the tendencies of a particular era, they do not offer conclusive testimony about its overall constitution. The surface-level expressions, however, by virtue of their unconscious nature, provide unmediated access to the fundamental substance of the state of the things."[39] While the deep analysis of meaning that a given society produces about itself might hold significance, a far richer source of material is located in the everyday, in the ephemera. What Kracauer calls the

"surface-level" aspects of everyday culture end up holding far more value as windows into the unstated desires of a group of people. The study of elite culture is a sucker's game, Kracauer argues; if one wants to develop a deep understanding of social development, one should look to the flotsam of popular culture.

If films—as a source for the analysis of culture and historical change—could provide some sort of qualified access to the thoughts of people who viewed them, then Kracauer was also concerned with the ways that culture was used to form or channel people's thoughts. Film in this formulation does important cultural work: it functions both as a "maker and as a marker" of historical change, to borrow historian Mary Louise Roberts's memorable phrase.[40] This brings Kracauer to a curious paradox. Culture expresses the inner lives of the people who consume it, but it also gives them the ideas that elites want them to have. Similar in form to the critiques of the "culture industry" that populate Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Kracauer anticipated their claims in his book *The Salaried Masses* (published first as a series of essays in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1929).[41] One passage expresses these ideas in a succinct way, and we need to focus our attention on the ways that Kracauer notes the narcotic, magical, and "hypnotizing" qualities of mass culture: "Almost all the industry's products serve to legitimize the existing order, by concealing both its abuses and its foundations. They, too, drug the populace with the pseudoglamour of counterfeit social heights, jut as hypnotists use glittering objects to put their subjects to sleep. The same applies to the illustrated papers and the majority of magazines. A closer analysis would presumably show that the image-motifs constantly recurring in them like magical incantations are intended to cast certain contents once and for all into the abyss of imageless oblivion."[42] When Kracauer reads the artifacts of Weimar culture for clues as to the origins of fascism, he sees again and again the ways that production and reception were conjoined. When Germans stared, hypnotized and spiritually ossified, at the magical screen, they not only took some small pleasure in the images they saw there, but they also sought out some small emotional solace that only heightened their cravings for a political savior that could fill the empty vortex of their spiritual lives. Kracauer's cultural history of fascism is predicated on his belief that Weimar culture was produced by—and productive of—fascists. Weimar culture appealed to fascists and like some hideous feedback cycle, it functioned as some emotional factory that produced damaging people from merely damaged ones. People entered the theater as Germans; they left, perhaps momentarily emotionally satisfied, but with some small part of them that craved a new and sinister world. The spiritless masses—if we believe Kracauer—found a new spirit suited to the new times in those dark theatres of Weimar Germany. Few today are willing to make such a leap between culture and behavior, but Kracauer's diagnosis of the appeal

of fascism as being born in the desperate search of Germans for a soul certainly retains its analytical value.

The relationship between the production and reception of culture was never fully straightened out in Kracauer's writings, but he continually affirmed the central analytical method of seeing in culture clues to people's unstated desires or outlooks. If Kracauer is correct (and few today would subscribe fully to this argument), then the contents of a film or of a novel provide evidence for what the viewer or reader believes. In "On Bestsellers and Their Audience" (June 1931), Kracauer proposes that the "success of a particular book can be explained only by the needs of these readers, who greedily devour certain components while decisively rejecting others. The success of a particular book cannot be explained by the qualities of the work itself—or if so, only to the extent that they satisfy those needs."[43] A bestseller, in other words, attained that status because they could be "tied to the satisfaction of long-lasting instincts and deep-seated expectations"; they "captivate the general consciousness at the moment."[44] In the context of a pervasive lack of spirit, even dime novels retain a certain significance. They indicate, even as they shape, the popular consciousness. And should these qualities perchance contain real traces of substance, they secure the book its fame not in their capacity as contents but rather as responses to widespread social tendencies."[45] He goes on in the essay to discuss the role of the book as a commodity, explaining that the "success of a book as a commodity ultimately depends upon the book's ability to satisfy the demands of a broad social stratum of consumers."[46]

We can see, then, that beginning in the early 1920s, Kracauer worked out a theory of cultural analysis and wrote a type of cultural history that depended in no small degree on the conflation of reception and production. Cultural artifacts were both finely tuned to appeal to masses of consumers, and these productions also "mirrored" the ideas and attitudes of consumers. An effect of this argument is to suggest that the culture of spiritual malaise that Kracauer believes characterized Weimar Germany, and which perhaps generated a popular attraction to fascism, could be traced in the cultural ephemera of the Weimar period. Kracauer makes such a claim in *From Caligari to Hitler*, writing that the "films of a nation reflect its mentality in a more direct way than other artistic media for two reasons: First, films are never the product of an individual. . . . Second, films address themselves, and appeal, to the anonymous multitude. Popular films—or, to be more precise, popular screen motifs—can therefore be supposed to satisfy existing mass desires."[47]

Fascinated by psychological methods and participating in the integration of Freudian theory and cultural analysis that motivated so much of the Frankfurt School, Kracauer bent his analysis of film to a study of what those films said about Germans in general. The conclusions were

not especially encouraging. Kracauer writes, "What films reflect are not so much explicit credos as psychological dispositions—those deep layers of collective mentality which extend more or less below the dimension of consciousness."[48] Culture provides insight into mass psychology. Films are especially conducive to cultural analysis because the marketplace makes it easy to see what people really feel and think: "That films particularly suggestive of mass desires coincide with outstanding box-office successes would seem a matter of course."[49]

By examining the themes, images, and recurring "motifs" across films, and especially when those elements bridge cultural strata from the high to the low, from the good to the bad, from the popular to the unpopular, one is able to diagnose political diseases more accurately: "Persistent reiteration of these motifs marks them as outward projections of inner urges."[50] *From Caligari to Hitler* represented nothing less than an attempt to understand what Kracauer called the "German soul" through a study of Weimar cinema.[51] Noting that the films of the period were peculiarly drawn to certain modes of narrative most often associated with horror, the occult, and the authoritarian, Kracauer comments that "macabre, sinister, morbid: these were the favorite adjectives used in describing them."[52] The wound of spiritlessness found resolution in films that were perfectly calibrated to reflect the underlying mood and psychological countenance of the German population. The Nazi soul, in other words, was first expressed on the Weimar screen.

The ideas about film and its uncanny ability to be read as expressions of mass psychology that Kracauer advanced in the 1920s, and which found their most complete resolution in *From Caligari to Hitler*, did not waver as Kracauer was able to consider the Nazi period from increasingly later historical vantage points. Indeed, Kracauer was even more direct in his assessments of the manipulative qualities of film as he matured as a critic. His *Theory of Film* (1960) reproduces and reinforces the larger argument about the seductive nature of the cinema but also inserts a qualitative statement about the especially persuasive abilities of film to woo people toward certain dispositions. "Films," Kracauer argues, "tend to weaken the spectator's consciousness. Its withdrawal from the scene may be furthered by the darkness in moviehouses. Darkness automatically reduces our contacts with actuality, depriving us of many environmental data needed for adequate judgments and other mental activities. It lulls the mind. This explains why, from the 'twenties to the present day, the devotees of film and its opponents alike have compared the medium to at a sort of drug and have drawn attention to its stupefying effects—incidentally, a sure sign that the spoken word has not changed much. Doping creates dope addicts."[53] Indeed, there is no film that is merely entertainment. Reproducing his positions from the 1920s, Kracauer asserts that to the "extent that films are mass entertainment they are bound to cater

to the alleged desires and daydreams of the public at large. . . . Since most commercial films are produced for mass consumption we are indeed entitled to assume that there exists a certain relationship between their intrigues and such daydreams as seem to be widespread among their patrons; otherwise expressed, the events on the screen can be supposed to bear, somehow, on actual dream patterns, thereby encouraging identification."[54] Seeking evidence of the origins of the Nazi soul in Weimar cinema, Kracauer in some fashion blames the medium itself.

The sense that he was living in a time of intense spiritual despair, combined with new techniques for producing and disseminating a mass culture, generated for an intellectual like Siegfried Kracauer the need to create the analytical tools necessary not only to diagnose mass culture but also to link its rootlessness to right-wing politics. The painful void that Kracauer found in the Weimar period was perhaps filled to some degree by—and, if you believe Kracauer, was also reflected in—Weimar film. The manic production of horror, of pitilessness, of occult fantasies, and of strong political leadership that characterized Weimar film not only expressed the dismay of Germans after the collapse of 1918 but also pushed them to seek a new spirit that they found in the swastika. In some ways this is a standard interpretation of the rise of the Nazi Party.

Yet by looking at Kracauer's diagnoses of the problems and his early analysis of the connections between Weimar culture and fascism, we get a fascinating account of how Weimar culture generated the conditions for its own demise. We are used to people today who like Weimar culture, who see in its chaos and unhinged declarations of psychological potency some hint of what it was like to live at the end of the world. We like to imagine that the inhabitants of Weimar Germany experienced firsthand what historian Johan Huizinga called the "passionate intensity of life."[55] I suspect that Kracauer would not be one of these people. Where we find liberation in the ephemeral products of Weimar culture, he saw the looming catastrophe, and he perhaps viewed his own time as Huizinga, writing in 1921, viewed the Middle Ages: "It is an evil world. The fires of hatred and violence burn fiercely. Evil is powerful, the devil covers a darkened earth with his black wings. And soon the end of the world is expected. But mankind does not repent, the church struggles, and the preachers and poets warn and lament in vain."[56]

Notes

[1] Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, ed. Leonardo Quaresima, revised expanded edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[2] Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 6.

[3] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, xviii.

[4] Dagmar Barnouw, *Critical Realism: History, Photography, and the Work of Siegfried Kracauer* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2006), 94.

[5] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, xix.

[6] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, xxii–xxiii.

[7] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 37.

[8] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 74.

[9] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 204.

[10] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 272.

[11] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 74.

[12] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 74.

[13] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 74.

[14] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 71.

[15] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 76.

[16] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 13–14.

[17] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 210.

[18] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 211.

[19] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 129.

[20] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 130.

[21] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 132.

[22] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 129.

[23] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 71.

[24] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 74.

[25] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 130.

[26] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 137.

[27] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 132.

[28] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 132.

[29] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 107.

[30] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 71.

[31] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 210.

[32] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 79.

[33] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 79.

[34] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 115.

[35] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 291.

[36] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 149.

[37] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 291.

[38] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 292.

[39] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 75.

[40] Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917–1927* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), 81.

[41] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 120–67.

[42] Siegfried Kracauer, *The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany* (London: Verso, 1998), 94.

[43] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 91.

[44] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 90.

[45] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 91.

[46] Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 91–2.

[47] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 5.

[48] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 6.

[49] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 7.

[50] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 8.

[51] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 3.

[52] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 3.

[53] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Oxford University Press, 1960), 159.

[54] Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 163.

[55] Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[56] Huizinga, *Autumn of the Middle Ages*, 29.

Part II.
Realities, 1933–1945

5: Pseudoscience Reconsidered: SS Research and the Archaeology of Haithabu

Fabian Link and J. Laurence Hare

Introduction: "Pseudoscience" in Nazi Germany

Along with notions of esotericism, scholars have frequently employed the concept of "pseudoscience" to describe forms of knowledge production in Nazi Germany. Indeed, these two concepts overlap in important ways. Both refer to approaches that contemporaries regarded as legitimate pathways to understanding concepts of *Volk* and *Rasse*, but that postwar scholars have since interpreted as evidence of the irrationality of Nazi ideology. Moreover, both implicated a wide range of pursuits that historians now characterize as unscientific. But where practitioners of esotericism often valued it as a form of "antiscience" with a focus on deriving knowledge from a nonmaterial realm, scientists used the term pseudoscience pejoratively to describe any approach falsely claiming scientific authority through a nominal or flawed engagement with empirical methods. In practice, of course, these distinctions are not always easy to draw, and the overlapping valency between such esoteric fields as parapsychology or dowsing and putatively pseudoscientific praxis in the Third Reich raise questions about the ways in which culture, politics, and social convention have historically played a role in determining what science is and which approaches are acceptable or unacceptable. They reveal, as Michael Gordin has convincingly shown, how the term *pseudoscience*, rather than simply reflecting a simple assessment of adherence to scientific norms, has in effect been used at certain times in targeted ways, for self-serving ends and against specific enemies.[1]

Such was the case in the postwar era, when pseudoscience became a convenient label for scholarly research conducted by Nazi organizations. Historians assumed that it was possible to draw clear boundaries between the false approaches of "Nazi science" and the "objective" tools of "real science."[2] Such a view suggested that the regime had either permitted research outside the boundaries of normal scholarship or had otherwise pressured scholars and manipulated findings. In any case, the notion of

pseudoscience made it possible not only to restore confidence in the reliability of scientific knowledge in Germany but also to rehabilitate the reputations of German scholars who were active during the years of the Third Reich.[3]

Today we know better. Recent studies have shown that many reputable scholars in the sciences and humanities participated in one way or another with Nazi organizations or otherwise assisted in the pursuit of Nazi goals. After the seizure of power in 1933, researchers entered voluntarily into a mutually beneficial arrangement with the regime, thus blurring any tidy boundaries between "Nazi" and "real" science.[4] Yet a number of questions remain about how to evaluate the knowledge produced by German scientists and scholars during the Nazi era and how to assess its theoretical, methodological, and moral qualities. This becomes especially difficult when we consider the numerous variables that determined Nazi interest in specific research on the one hand and levels of engagement from scholars on the other. For instance, hard science disciplines, such as physics and chemistry, profited more in relative terms from the regime than fields such as philosophy and German studies, even though many scholars in these disciplines were supportive of the NSDAP.[5] Furthermore, such differences shifted over time. While in the early years of the regime Nazi politicians were interested in scholarly disciplines that legitimized Nazi ideology, such as medieval history, folklore studies, and archaeology, after 1936 they began offering more support to the natural sciences and engineering, which were needed to boost armaments technology and facilitate preparations for war.[6]

Another analytical difficulty concerns the differences among the structures and practices of the disciplines themselves, and particularly between the natural sciences on the one hand and the humanities and social sciences on the other. While it is true that these latter fields operated somewhat differently than natural science disciplines, recent historians of science have generally debunked the notion of a strict separation between the sciences and the humanities.[7] Many of these disciplines shared similar methods, theoretical backgrounds, and scholarly dispositions. Such commonalities matter because they have made it possible for postwar historians to apply the same scientific and pseudoscientific labels to the humanities and social sciences. Nevertheless, their more diverse roots in historicism and positivism and the relations among methods, theory, and ideology render evaluations of these fields more complex than in the natural sciences. The limits of those commonalities help explicate the complexity of applying labels such as "pseudoscience," because the contrast between esotericism and natural science is sharper than in the social sciences and in the humanities, where epistemology, ontology, and argumentation are constantly contested on less empirical grounds.

Consequently, a consensus has yet to emerge on how to evaluate humanities and social science knowledge produced in Nazi Germany. For these disciplines, the relations among practices, epistemology, and folkish (*völkisch*) political aims remain controversial, as does the question about the "progressive" or "regressive" character of methods developed and applied during the Nazi regime. Historians like Jürgen Kocka have been intrigued by the connections between an "ideological regression" on the one hand and the capacity for "methodological innovation" on the other.[8] In this view, researchers with a pro-Nazi mindset developed empirical, quantitative, and interdisciplinary methods at odds with older historicist approaches. Kocka is thus among those who suggest that scholars were able to effect a functional division between method, epistemological foundation, and political commitment. As a result, these scholars were able to convert their interest in *Volk* and race after the war and contribute to the West German structural and social history of the 1950s and 1960s.[9] Other scholars are more skeptical, and consider the knowledge produced in Nazi Germany to be either methodologically ambivalent or not at all innovative.[10] Focusing on fields of "folk research" (*Volksforschung*), Axel Flügel argues that Nazi-era scholars achieved no meaningful methodological breakthroughs, engaged in relatively meager interdisciplinary research, and were ultimately popular in the 1930s simply because of their appeal to Nazi ideologues.[11] Echoing these sentiments is Gadi Algazi, whose study of the *Volk*-historian Otto Brunner leads him to reject any hint of a connection to the structural and social history of the 1960s.[12] Among those highlighting the interdisciplinary quality of research and application of "modern" methods are Michael Falhbusch, Ingo Haar, and Carsten Klingemann. According to their view, many of the researchers who became prominent in Nazi demographic politics did so precisely because their work had been recognized as innovative and they could thus offer scientific expertise for the inhuman projects of the Nazis.[13]

While these interpretations shed light on the relevance of scientific knowledge in Nazi policy, they elide the significance of the scholars' epistemological foundations. For this reason, we propose to take a fresh look at the nature of scientific research in Nazi Germany by focusing on the research field of early medieval archaeology (*frühmittelalterliche Archäologie*) and examining in particular the excavation site at Haithabu in Schleswig-Holstein. Haithabu was a Viking-age trading village that had disappeared around the eleventh century CE and had been rediscovered in the early twentieth century. Its excavation makes an excellent case study for our purposes, first because the discipline that investigated it stood so squarely between the humanities and the sciences. Early medieval archaeology had ties to history and philology, but over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it had adopted an empiricist outlook, employed methods that emphasized systematic classifications

and comparisons of artifact evidence, and engaged in a number of interdisciplinary approaches with both the natural and social sciences. Even if archaeologists have been reluctant to label their discipline as a science, many have become conscious of the discipline's place within a scientific framework, and they have judged its practitioners accordingly.[14]

The Haithabu excavations were also important because they were of tremendous interest to Nazi ideologues. In 1937, the project came under the personal patronage of Heinrich Himmler, who generously funded research at the site through his *SS-Ahnenerbe* (Institute for Ancestral Heritage) organization. Indeed, Haithabu was the largest *SS-Ahnenerbe* project during the 1930s. The supervisor of the digs, Herbert Jankuhn (1905–90), was both a well-respected archaeologist with university training and a high-ranking member of the SS.[15] Finally, the Haithabu project was significant because it extended to the decades before and after the Nazi period. As a scholar, Jankuhn, too, enjoyed a successful career after the Nazi era, and even today his writings on Haithabu continue to mark him as an innovative archaeologist. For these reasons, a closer look at Haithabu through the publications of Herbert Jankuhn allows us to reconsider the fluid boundaries between science and pseudoscience. Above all, we propose to ask whether a division between pseudoscientific, Germanocentric, and *völkisch* ideology on the one hand, and innovative methodology and progressive techniques on the other, was possible and whether this division constitutes an appropriate characterization for the knowledge produced from the study of this Viking site.

Archaeology between Empiricism and Weltanschauung

The Haithabu village site rests along the shores of the Schlei inlet a few kilometers from Schleswig-Holstein's Baltic coast. Its only visible remnant is a semicircular mound between three and six meters in height, which encircles a field of more than fifty acres and connects it to the medieval Danevirke fortifications stretching west across the base of the Jutland peninsula to the Treene River (fig. 5.1). During the nineteenth century, historians assumed that the mound represented little more than a fortified point along the Danevirke. Only in the 1890s did new digs by German archaeologists lead the Danish prehistorian Sophus Müller (1846–1934) to make comparisons with similar formations in Scandinavia, where the earthworks served as defensive perimeters around permanent settlements.[16] Subsequent analysis of artifacts and human remains revealed numerous objects from outside the region and burials of women and children, which reinforced the notion that the site had once served as a residential trading community.[17]

Fig. 5.1. Aerial photograph of the Haithabu area, from Herbert Jankuhn, *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu: Vorläufiger Grabungsbericht* (Berlin-Dahlem: Ahnenerbe-Stiftung Verlag, 1943), 16.

The discovery of Haithabu thus attested to the power of an emerging "scientific" discipline of prehistoric and early medieval archaeology four decades before the Nazi seizure of power. Its discovery affirmed the promise of a rigid methodology designed to record carefully the process of excavation and to facilitate close analysis of uncovered artifacts. In fact, the methods were sophisticated enough that archaeologists investigating the site today continue to use the site reports and excavation diagrams produced a century earlier.[18] Coupled with the comparative techniques that ultimately identified the site, such approaches reflected a strong commitment to empiricism that yielded not only hard data, such as the number and variety of given artifact forms, but also such descriptive interpretations as artifact usage and house construction techniques.

Over the next three decades, the Haithabu project's engagement with scientific techniques gradually intersected with two epistemological crises afflicting the German sciences and humanities at the turn of the century. The first was an intellectual crisis that Johannes Heinßen has linked to a breakdown in the prevailing "culture of history" (*Geschichtskultur*) of the nineteenth century. At issue was a shift in the German historicist tradition from totalizing Hegelian and Marxist philosophies to the more anomic cultural criticism of the fin de siècle, which left conservative scholars seeking alternative models to restore a sense of a holistic scientific reality.[19] The second crisis took the form of a spiritual malaise brought on by the rise of positivism and rationalism, whose demystifying impulse created what Max Weber labeled a "disenchantment of the world."[20] On its own, of course, science was not to blame for the decline of a holistic worldview, nor was it entirely a German problem. Indeed, many highly respected scholars across Europe had long linked their scientific approach to a spiritual worldview (*Weltanschauung*). In the seventeenth century, even Isaac Newton felt at ease searching for "whole truths" not only by applying exact mathematical models but also by drawing on theological and cult ideas.[21] Rather, at issue at the dawn of the twentieth century was a particular scientific perspective that placed emphasis on establishing objective "certainty," which left many contemporary thinkers yearning to rediscover a sense of higher purpose.[22] What made the problem unique in the German context was the particular concoction of racial and *völkisch* thinking that many German scholars posited as a solution, as Peter Staudenmaier suggests in the first chapter of this volume.

These two problems, on the one hand representing a "crisis of reality" and on the other signaling a crisis of meaning,[23] informed the development of a scientific archaeology in the twentieth century. Specifically, they intersected at the point where scholars moved beyond direct interpretation of remains and attempted either to decipher the specific meanings that once attached to artifacts and structures or to articulate more broadly the cultural and historical significance of archaeological sites. It was in such instances that theory exceeded the empirical limits of the material objects under study. In practical terms, the dilemma manifested itself as an attempt to utilize archaeology as a tool for uncovering the roots of a German *Volk* or *Rasse*, terms that became intertwined in the scientific worldview of some scholars. In the early twentieth century, one of the most notable examples of a *völkisch* approach was the so-called settlement archaeology (*Siedlungsarchäologie*) of Gustaf Kossinna (1856–1931), a professor of prehistory at the University of Berlin. Kossinna advanced the idea that definable artifact types corresponded to specific ethnic groups. By determining the geographical distribution of specific artifacts and site construction styles, archaeologists could in turn identify "provinces" where the culture of a given ethnic group had once prevailed.[24]

When they first appeared in the 1890s, Kossinna's theories proved controversial among European archaeologists, who debated whether artifact styles could accurately reveal the ethnic makeup of European regions, or whether they could be traced back as far as Kossinna claimed.[25]

At first, the Haithabu project was untouched by the wider debate. Dwindling resources during the First World War halted the digs at Haithabu until 1930. As the site lay fallow, however, the surrounding catastrophes of war and revolution exacerbated the underlying intellectual crises within the German sciences, and radicalized many German scholars. During this period, *völkisch* and racial concepts proliferated within German academia. Andrew Evans has argued, for example, that the German discipline of "physical anthropology" (*Anthropologie*) essentially transformed into a science of "racial ethnology" (*Rassenkunde*) after the First World War.[26] *Völkisch* ideology, meanwhile, grew more attractive as an orientation for certain scholars, who radicalized their mindset in a world that they saw as more confusing and "disenchanted" than ever before. Gustaf Kossinna was among those whose work became more political in the post-Versailles climate. In 1919, he drew on his "settlement archaeology" approach to chart the longstanding presence of Germanic peoples along the country's eastern frontiers and thereby protest the territorial revisions that created the Polish Corridor.[27] Similar projects appeared a few years later in other social science disciplines, including most significantly the *Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde* (Atlas of German Folklore), which beginning in 1928 brought together geographers, ethnologists, folklorists, and thousands of research volunteers to map the location and distribution of purportedly "German" customs and folkways.[28]

Such perspectives became a part of the Haithabu excavations when they resumed in 1930. That year, the historian Otto Scheel (1876–1954) joined the art historian Peter Paulsen (1902–85) in publishing a source bibliography to support new research at Haithabu, a site they deemed to be of "world historical" importance.[29] The following autumn, a new round of digs began under the direction of Gustav Schwantes (1881–1960), director of the Schleswig-Holstein Museum of Antiquities and professor at the University of Kiel. An experienced excavator, Schwantes utilized recent advances in technique to effect a more ambitious excavation. Where previous archaeologists had probed the walls at various points, Schwantes and his team cut systematic trenches with measured cross sections designed to investigate the site "as a totality."[30] Such improved methods quickly hinted at the richness of the remains. Rising water levels over the centuries had encased much of the village in mud, which helped preserve artifacts and wooden structures and promised to reveal much about how the site was built.[31] Artifact analysis uncovered evidence of overlapping cultural influences, which reinforced the interpretation of the site as part of a broad trading network. Finally, examinations

of grave goods and burial styles in the village cemeteries suggested that the community had witnessed a transition from paganism to Christianity. The finds received tremendous publicity, and the cultural and religious shifts evident at the site inspired a number of popular writers. The playwright Paul Leuchensring, for example, fictionalized the decline of Nordic pagan religion through a tragedy focused on the struggle between the Haithabu chieftain Chnuba and his son Sigtrygg, who engages in a noble but ultimately futile struggle to protect his people's traditions against his father's conversion to Christianity.[32] Another writer, Heinar Schilling, focused on the Nordic and Germanic makeup of the site's inhabitants and extolled Haithabu as a "Germanic Troy" that was once a center of *völkisch* and racial unity across the German and Scandinavian lands.[33] Thus, by the time Nazi functionaries began expressing interest in the Haithabu project, the site was already widely popular as both a showpiece of the latest advances in archaeological methodology and an important relic for *völkisch* thinkers.

Among the members of Schwantes's team was Herbert Jankuhn, who in many ways typified the radical-conservative young scholars researching in the 1930s. Indeed, a number of factors predisposed Jankuhn to the *völkisch* thought becoming popular in interwar Germany. He had, after all, grown up in a conservative nationalist family in East Prussia, an area regarded after the First World War as a "folk German" (*volksdeutsch*) territory separated from Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. Born in 1905, he was among the members of the so-called "war-youth" or "uncompromising" generation who were too young to fight in the war but whose experiences in the chaotic years of the early Weimar Republic radicalized many of them in the 1920s.[34] Moreover, he began his university studies in Königsberg, which was well known as a center for revisionist and *völkisch*-nationalist scholars, particularly in history.[35] Thus, by the time he completed his studies in 1927, Jankuhn had been thoroughly socialized into a radical-conservative milieu. It is not surprising that he received military training in the illegal, so-called *Schwarze Reichswehr* (Black German Army) during the 1920s,[36] or that he later exhibited support for National Socialism by applying for membership in the paramilitary SA in 1934.[37]

At the same time, however, Jankuhn developed strong academic credentials as an archaeologist. Following his studies in Königsberg, he pursued doctoral research in Berlin under the mentorship of Carl Schuchhardt (1859–1943), who was regarded as a pioneer in the study of fortification research (*Burgenforschung*) in European prehistory. In 1931, with the help of Schuchhardt and Gerhard Bersu (1889–1964), Jankuhn secured a position working with Gustav Schwantes in Kiel, where he assisted with the Haithabu excavations in the early 1930s.[38] Such scholarly influences placed him at the forefront of his field while distancing

him from the more radical *völkisch* interpretations of the Kossinna school of archaeological research. Schuchardt and Schwantes had each expressed doubts about Kossinna's interpretations and his methods, even as they entertained ethnohistoric questions in their own studies of European prehistory.[39] In his study of Gustav Schwantes's work, for example, the archaeologist Michael Gebühr reports that during the 1930s Schwantes was critical of the "pseudoscientific *Germanomanen* texts" that strived to render objective research into "the development of our *Volk*" more exciting for readers.[40]

Nazi Science Policy and the Scientific Field

Based on his work with Schwantes at the Haithabu site, Jankuhn published his second thesis (*Habilitationsschrift*) in 1935, entitled *Die Wehranlagen zwischen Schlei und Treene* (The fortifications between Schlei and Treene). The work was well received and quickly made Jankuhn a highly respected Viking specialist. By this time, of course, the NSDAP had come to power in Germany and had begun to engage German cultural and academic institutions in a process of coordination (*Gleichschaltung*). Most notably, this involved Nazi leaders expelling scholars categorized as Jewish as well as politically and religiously "undesirable" scientists from the German academic system in favor of younger, supposedly "Aryan" researchers.[41] Thus, while his Jewish colleague Gerhard Bersu was forced into retirement, Jankuhn found his own star on the rise in the Third Reich. But his credentials as a scientist were not complete without solid political affiliations. For this reason, Jankuhn joined both the NSDAP and the *NS-Dozentenbund* (National Socialist University Teacher's League).[42]

Other changes in the academic field proved less programmatic. Nazi leaders could envision the ideal racial and ideological qualities of the scientist, but they appeared less certain about how the sciences and humanities should conform to the tenets of Nazism. Yet even if no clear concept of "Nazi science" emerged, at least three key principles guided the practice of science during the 1930s and 1940s. First among these was the notion that research should reflect the broader society in which it was produced, which in practice meant pursuing meaningful aims in line with Nazi values.[43] A second, related principle held that science and life should be "reunited," which meant that the natural phenomena observed by the researcher should be connected to the researcher's experience of the phenomena as a whole reality. Such an idea was opposed to the "intellectual disorder" of abstract science like Einstein's theory of relativity.[44] Third was a strong preference for *Rasse* as a prime object of study, and for *Volk* as a central question of research. For archaeologists, such an attitude not only implicated the study of skeletal remains, but also the supposed traces of ethnic entities in certain geographical areas during ancient times.

In many ways, the general orientation of scientific fields like archaeology reflected an ongoing engagement with the epistemological crises of the previous decades, and cooperation with Nazi organizations did not mark a significant change in this regard. As Bernard Mees has shown, the supposedly pseudoscientific and esoteric theories of such figures as the astro-archaeologist Wilhelm Teudt (1860–1942) and the Germanic mythologist Otto Wilhelm Rahn (1904–39), though they arguably advocated more fantastic ideas, nevertheless continued a discourse on German culture, Germanic antiquity, and Nordic mythology already well established in academic and intellectual fields in the Germanophone countries as counterconcepts to notions of "Romanness" and "Jewishness."[45] Rather, what was new was a greater concern for aligning the products of scholarly research with political goals. Thus, just as scientific and esoteric work in the 1930s continued to inform efforts to revise the post-Versailles borders of the country, so too did the interest in racial science respond to a perceived sense of modern decadence that Nazi politicians had routinely denounced in the Weimar years. At the same time, a concern with *Rasse* and *Volk* presented the possibility of creating a new people's community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) by marrying the fruits of research with techniques in social engineering and public policy. Of course, such measures later came to mean not only the promotion of a healthy racial community but also the eradication of groups regarded as "unworthy of life."[46]

The intersection of right-radical politics and *völkisch*-racial conceptions had an impact on scholarly credibility. After 1933, the wide-ranging interests of Nazi ideologues and the eclectic nature of Nazi science policy allowed less reputable scholars to pursue *völkisch*-racist research agendas. Two key examples were the "Aryan physicists" Johannes Stark (1874–1957) and Philipp Lenard (1862–1947). Both were Nobel laureates whose scientific views became marginalized in the 1920s due to the wider acceptance of Einsteinian relativity. Under the Nazis, both men rejected the "Jewish physics" of Einstein and promoted a notion of scientific credibility based on the racial qualities of the scientist.[47] At the same time, new Nazi scientific organizations supported otherwise discredited scholars outside mainstream institutions whose work nevertheless conformed to the worldviews of leading Nazi ideologues. Among these was Herman Wirth (1885–1981), an amateur historian and symbologist who became the first director of the *SS-Ahnenerbe* in 1935. With financial support from Heinrich Himmler, Wirth conducted a dubious field study of rock carvings at Bohuslän in Sweden, which he claimed as proof that the Nordic race was the true founder of civilization.[48]

Such examples have been used since to lend credence to the notion that Nazi policies promoted the proliferation of pseudoscience. They helped preserve outdated theories, elevated disreputable research, and, by expelling Jewish, leftist, and liberal scholars from German universities,

created space for a new cohort whose claim to credibility rested to a large degree on their racial characteristics, acceptance of *völkisch* ideas, and political loyalty. In other words, Nazi politics altered what Michael Shermer has called the "geography of knowledge," in that they disrupted the boundaries scholarly communities had established between acceptable and unacceptable practice.[49] The situation becomes more complex, however, when we recognize that many of the young scholars who entered the field during the 1930s, including Herbert Jankuhn, were well educated and trained to reject transgressions against scientific norms. For this reason, a final critical feature of science during the Nazi era was its mutability. Just as it is difficult to identify a clear "Nazi" brand of science, so too it is impossible to understand scholarship as uniform across the 1930s and 1940s. For instance, the *völkisch* principles informing the work of many German scientists rejected a sense of "internationalism" or "universalism" in favor of a national framework of thinking.[50] But such thinking also raised concerns about the international status of German scholarship and they also drew on an ariosophic worldview that involved a selectively cosmopolitan conception of Indo-European civilization and prehistory. Many scholars worried that "*völkisch* fantasists" like Stark and Lenard would do irreparable harm to Germany's reputation, while others noted the alarm that had greeted the dismissal of well-known scholars like Gerhard Bersu.[51]

In response to pressure from some quarters of the academic community, the *Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung* (Reich Ministry for Science, Education, and Culture) began in 1936 to grant more autonomy to the universities, based on the argument that the regime needed "respected scientists and scholars" to secure Germany's future as a "world power."[52] That same year marked the beginning of the Four Year Plan that reflected the regime's goal of preparing for war. As science ministry chief Bernhard Rust explained, the plan would require "all forces in scientific research."[53] The result was a shift in German science policy toward rationalization, which Nazi leaders hoped would produce the kinds of credible knowledge needed for developing armaments and for agrarian and demographic planning. There was also a desire to support reputable scholars who might represent German science in occupied European territories. Consequently, there was less space in the late 1930s for "*völkisch* fantasists."[54]

The process of rationalization manifested itself clearly in Himmler's *SS-Ahnenerbe*. In 1937, Wirth was replaced as chief by Walther Wüst (1901–93), a more respected oriental philologist and professor at the University of Munich. Together with the *SS-Ahnenerbe* secretary Wolfram Sievers (1905–48), Wüst converted the organization into an efficient research institute and yet, paradoxically, many of the more fantastical projects of Himmler and the *SS-Ahnenerbe* reached their apex under Wüst, as Eric Kurlander

shows in his contribution to this volume.[55] Furthermore, the *SS-Ahnenerbe* accumulated more financial support through Himmler's connections to private businesses, including the Bayerische Motorwerke (BMW), the Daimler-Benz, and the Deutsche Rentenbank-Kreditanstalt.[56] More credible leadership and rich resources in turn helped lure reputable scholars to the organization. The changes, of course, did not mean that Himmler had abandoned either his dilettante scholarly interests or his ideological goals. Rather, the transformation of the *SS-Ahnenerbe* served to mobilize promising young researchers while rationalizing the utopian-mythical and racist aims and questions of interest to the Nazis.

The Haithabu Excavations: Archaeological Knowledge in the Nazi Regime

Heinrich Himmler had taken a personal interest in the Haithabu excavations as early as 1934 but only gained a formal status as patron in 1937. By that time, Jankuhn had been involved in a heated dispute with the archaeologist Hans Reinerth (1900–1990), who worked under Alfred Rosenberg as head of the *Reichsbund für deutsche Vorgeschichte* (Reich League for German Prehistory). The *Reichsbund* had grown from a former association founded by Gustaf Kossinna, and Reinerth considered himself an adherent of Kossinna's scholarship. Under Reinerth, the group sought to synchronize prehistoric and medieval archaeological studies in Germany while also marginalizing classical archaeology and scholars who did not otherwise subscribe to the *Reichsbund*'s racialized and *völkisch* views. Jankuhn opposed Reinerth in part because of his hostility to Jankuhn's mentors, namely Schuchhardt and Schwantes, and also because he felt that control of the Haithabu digs might be at stake.[57] A closer relationship with the *SS-Ahnenerbe* thus promised to provide some cover, because it placed Haithabu under the patronage of Heinrich Himmler, who incorporated it into his own power struggle against Alfred Rosenberg after 1937.[58] At the same time, the political goals of the SS, which sought to establish an "Aryan ethnocracy" in Europe in opposition to Bolshevism, Western parliamentarism, and Enlightenment notions of universal human rights, were not incompatible with the ethno-nationalism inherent in Jankuhn's research field. In March 1937, Jankuhn gave Himmler a personal tour of the site and a few months later joined the NSDAP. Early the following year, he began working for the SS as an archaeologist and received a promotion to replace Gustav Schwantes as director of the Schleswig-Holstein Museum in Kiel. The Haithabu project, meanwhile, was incorporated into Himmler's research organization.[59]

Between 1936 and 1939, Jankuhn produced two major publications on the Haithabu digs, which together reveal much about the specific

character of knowledge generated under Nazi auspices. The first was *Haithabu: Eine germanische Stadt der Frühzeit* (Haithabu: a Germanic town of early times), first published in 1937, and the second was *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu 1937–1939* (The excavations at Haithabu, 1937–1939), published in 1943. While the former was a popular book aimed at a nonacademic audience, including Jankuhn's Nazi patrons, the second was a specialized monograph directed at colleagues in prehistoric and medieval archaeology.

Jankuhn's popular book exemplified the new guiding principles for science in Nazi Germany. The book included elements of *völkisch* vitalism, most notably in its attempt to delineate a chain of ancestry from prehistoric times to the contemporary era qua linguistics, cultural artifacts, and ethnic continuity as a natural process. Moreover, its style appealed to nationalist sentiment through the use of militarized metaphors, describing the Migration Period of the Germanic tribes as the "struggle (*Kampf*) of a hearty farming people (*Bauernvolk*) for lands of settlements," and by portraying Germanic peoples as "communities of warriors," whose expansive impulses smacked of aggressive revisionism.[60] The book also established clear Germanocentric aims by alluding to Haithabu as a "community of blood and fate" (*Blut- und Schicksalsgemeinschaft*) and, particularly for prehistoric and early medieval archaeology, by placing emphasis on the contact among the Germanic tribes that had supposedly inhabited the site. Toward the end of the volume, Jankuhn surveyed studies of skeletal material as it related to the "Racial Affiliation at Haithabu." He concluded, based on these studies, that the site had seen "racially . . . rather consistent."[61] Finally, Jankuhn considered the significance of Haithabu for German and northern European history, arguing in sweeping language that Haithabu was "the bridge between the West Germanic to the Northern Germanic culture circle" and "the greatest monument of the early Germanic times."[62]

The second report, *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu*, was fully financed and published by the *SS-Ahnenerbe*. In the foreword, Jahnkuhn mentioned the status of Reich leader (*Reichsführer*) Heinrich Himmler as patron (*Schirmherr*) of the site and acknowledged that SS support had enabled a more expansive excavation than in the previous years.[63] Beyond this brief statement, however, there was no discussion of Nazi involvement in the project. In fact, *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu* departed from Jankuhn's earlier popular work by focusing much more attention on archaeological technique, documentation, and interpretation of finds and artifacts. Jankuhn discussed in particular the research questions and methods that informed the digs during the late 1930s, and highlighted the excavation's potential to provide for the first time a representative image of the whole site.

The report was divided into three parts. In the first section, Jankuhn discussed the methods and findings from the main excavation area, which

included parts of the semicircular mound surrounding the former village. At issue were problems associated with stratigraphic assessments of the ramparts, along with interpretations of remains of wooden buildings (see fig. 5.2). The section also exhibited a number of methods designed to render his interpretations reproducible for peer archaeologists. Jankuhn utilized detailed drawings and photographs (see fig. 5.3), including aerial photographs, in order to illustrate the basis of his assessments of the general archaeological situation at the site. A careful numbering system, meanwhile, linked artifacts to the strata in which they were found and thereby facilitated a relative chronology for recovered objects (see fig. 5.4). Jankuhn also discussed his collaboration with architects and with Scandinavian researchers, which testified to his interdisciplinary and comparative commitments. Such approaches led him to read the stratigraphy inherent in the site as proof that Haithabu had experienced several distinct phases of settlement throughout its history.[64]

The second and third parts of the report discussed the process of categorizing and dating the artifacts uncovered during the excavation, including those found both inside and outside the village walls. The methods employed here involved comparing finds with objects recovered from other excavated settlements across northern Europe.[65] In one instance, Jankuhn studied Viking ornamental key pinches from the site and compared them to similar exemplars found on the Isle of Man and in eastern Germany. He also observed similarities over time, noting that the ornaments were modeled after earlier Bronze Age styles and persisted for centuries after the Viking Age, with examples appearing as late as the eighteenth century. He interpreted this as evidence of artistic continuity among the cultures of northern Europe and as proof that the whole region, including the British Islands, had been a Germanic cultural province.[66] In this way, *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu*, like the earlier popular work, concerned itself with determining the ethnic makeup of the Haithabu inhabitants and the wider Schleswig-Holstein region. Such a finding of commonality across northern Europe was important for understanding Haithabu, because it tied together the disparate forms of house construction he had found in the digs. Jankuhn thus acknowledged that two particular types of homebuilding techniques, which he linked respectively to "northern Germanic" and "Frisian-Saxon" peoples,[67] proved that the village had been home to more than one cultural group, but at the same time he was able to show that the inhabitants had nevertheless emerged from the same overarching Germanic-Viking milieu.

Beyond this point, there were some significant differences between the reports. Within the pages of *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu*, we do not see the same examples of chauvinistic, *völkisch*-nationalist, or revisionist language, and the word *race* is strikingly absent. Instead, Jankuhn seems to have employed more neutral terminology in line with earlier

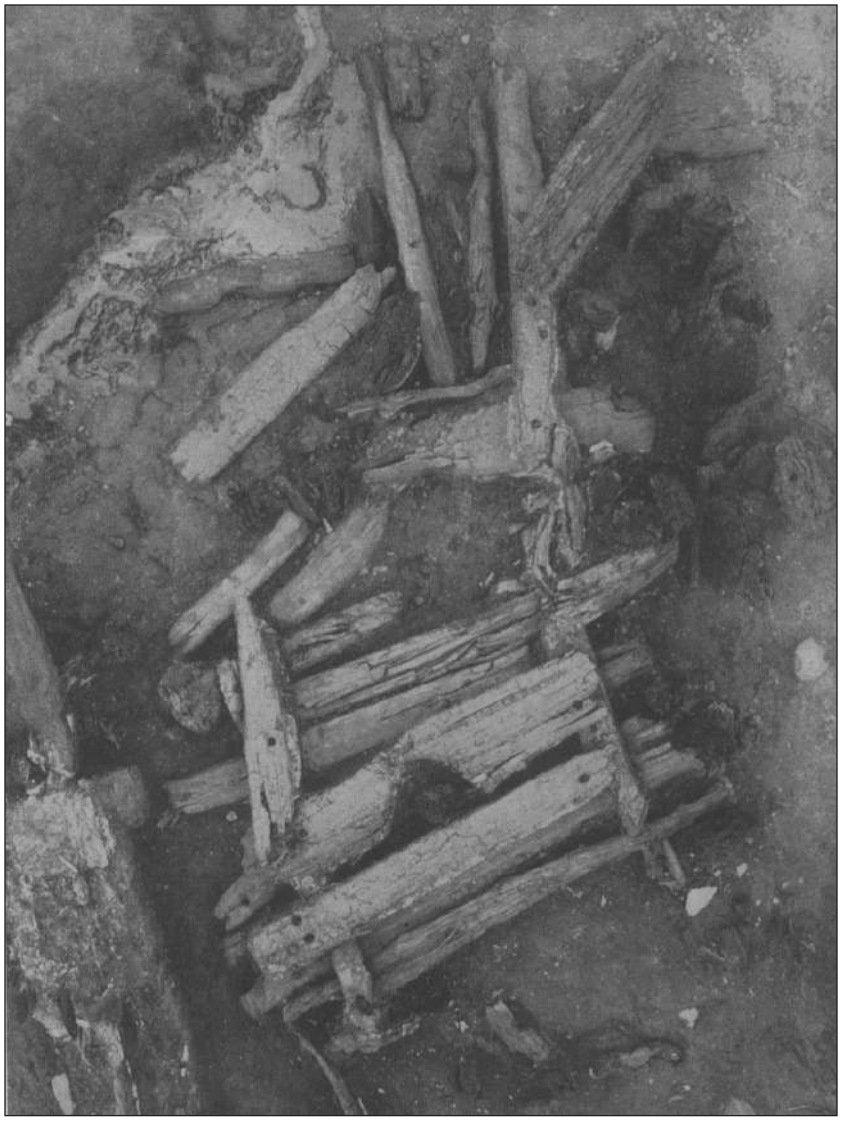

Fig. 5.2. Remains of a wooden path at Haithabu, from Herbert Jankuhn, *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu: Vorläufiger Grabungsbericht* (Berlin-Dahlem: Ahnenerbe-Stiftung Verlag, 1943), 39.

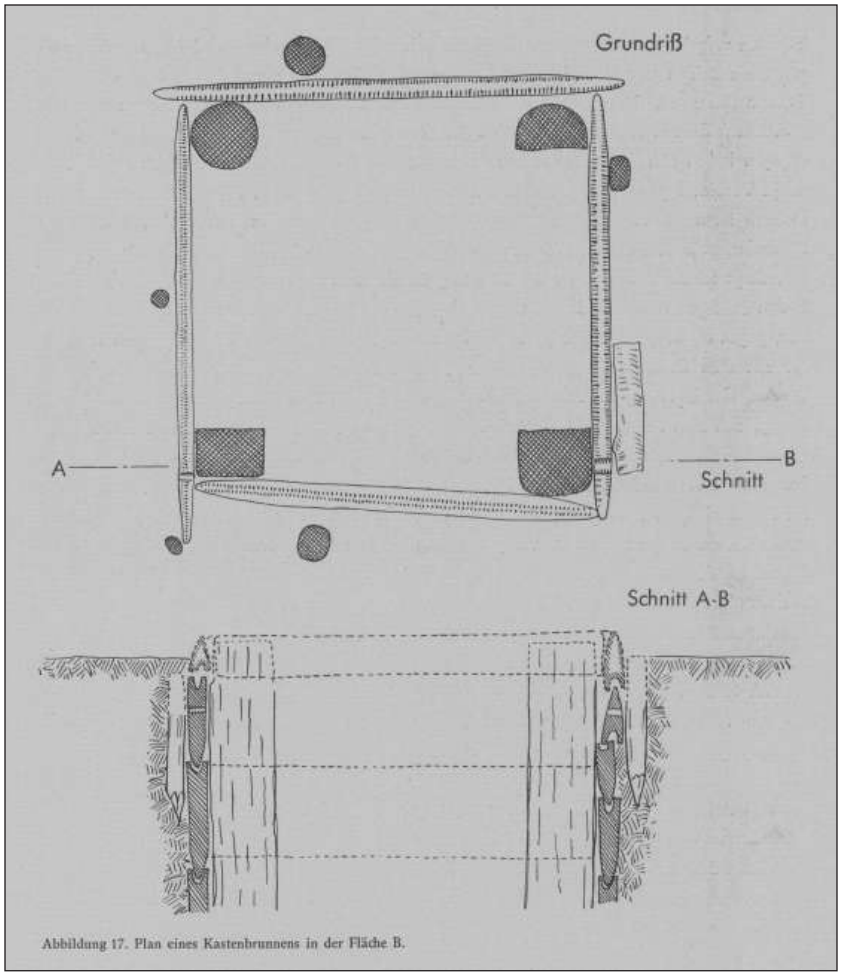

Fig. 5.3. Drawings of the construction techniques of a well at Haithabu, from Herbert Jankuhn, *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu: Vorläufiger Grabungsbericht* (Berlin-Dahlem: Ahnenerbe-Stiftung Verlag, 1943), 45.

conclusions he had made in his dissertation and *Habilitationsschrift*. In those texts, Jankuhn had specifically expressed skepticism about Kossinna's *Siedlungsarchäologie*.[68] In contrast to *Haithabu: Eine germanische Stadt der Frühzeit*, which proclaimed that the Germanic "bloodline" was unique in that it "could be traced back even further than the Celts, Romans, and Slavs,"[69] *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu* maintained that artifact typologies alone were insufficient for identifying ethnic groups; rather, what was needed was a clear correlation between artifact evidence

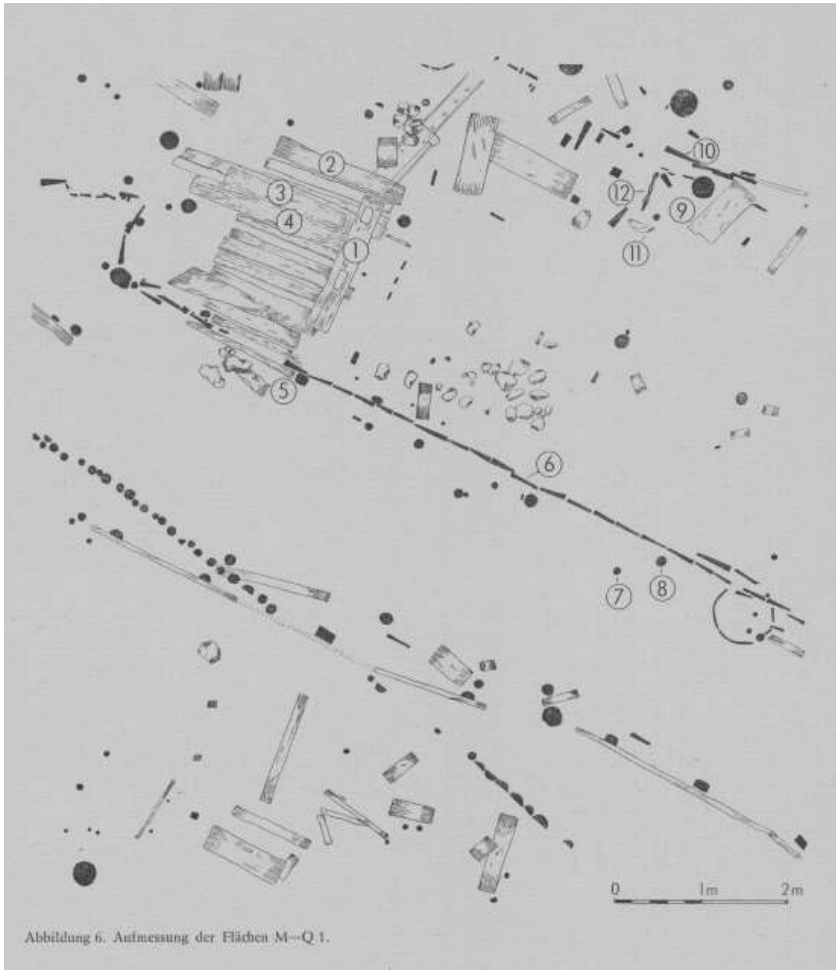

Fig. 5.4. Number system of the archaeological findings at Haithabu, from Herbert Jankuhn, *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu: Vorläufiger Grabungsbericht* (Berlin-Dahlem: Ahnenerbe-Stiftung Verlag, 1943), 22.

and extant historical texts. Such doubts led Jankuhn to adopt an interdisciplinary methodology at Haithabu, whose conclusions thwarted notions of "consistent" settlement patterns in favor of a diverse mix of Angles, Saxons, and even some Slavic groups.

The apparent differences between these two reports seem to fit Jürgen Kocka's notion of an effective divide between methodology and interpretation. While the former was on clear display in the 1943 monograph, the latter appeared most prominently in the 1937 work with references to the "racial affiliation" and "historical meaning" of a

"Germanic town." Indeed, the perception of such a split was critical for the archaeologists themselves, as they attempted after the war to draw a line between their political and their scientific work. Herbert Jankuhn, in particular, admitted to his support for National Socialism but steadfastly maintained that he had succeeded in pursuing unbiased research throughout the period.[70] His colleagues made similar claims on his behalf while he was awaiting trial in an American POW camp. In one letter, Gustav Schwantes wrote that Jankuhn, whom he described as his "best co-worker," had agreed to excavate under SS auspices only after they had assured "absolute scientific integrity" at the site.[71] Another colleague, Günther Haseloff (1912–90), wrote that Jankuhn "tried, in spite of the connection to the SS, to continue the old scholarly tradition," which meant that he sought to pursue standard archaeological practice unadulterated by Nazi influence.[72] Such accounts, which later helped Jankuhn restore his career and even resume his work at Haithabu, informed the view that scholars like him created politicized interpretations for the benefit of the Reich, but by separating their work for public and professional consumption, they preserved their commitments to producing "hard facts."[73] This was the same reason why purportedly less reputable and more "political" archaeologists like Hans Reinerth were unable to return to mainstream academia after the war.[74]

A closer look at the texts, however, suggests that this view is misleading for at least two reasons. First, it is wrong to assume that politicization extended only to interpretations and that methods could be separated from the specific context of the Nazi regime. Despite its preference for methodological discussion and its muted chauvinism, *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu* was still the one major Jankuhn work to appear under the SS imprimatur at a time when the Germans held sway over much of continental Europe. Its very status as a cutting-edge scholarly work informed SS efforts to demonstrate German superiority in scientific research as a component of a proposed "New Order" in Europe. The competence of Jankuhn's research was a key element in the ongoing Himmler–Rosenberg rivalry, which played out not only at home but also in the occupied territories.[75] Second, even if the quality of their interpretations differed, both texts were similar in that they aimed to establish an ethnohistorical account of the site. This was no mere nod toward the racial ideology of the Third Reich, but reflected much older epistemological dilemmas in the field. Moreover, such interpretations were not as far removed from methodological considerations as we might imagine. Using advanced techniques to uncover the various forms of home construction or utilizing broad comparisons and interdisciplinary approaches to assess artifacts types did not serve merely to reconstruct cultural and economic life at Haithabu; rather, they represented the most precise means possible of determining

the specific groups—whether ethnic, tribal, or racial—that settled in the village. The conclusions, in turn, informed politicized conclusions about the quality of those groups. In this way, method, theory, and interpretation were inextricably linked, and all lent themselves to an easy congruence between *völkisch* scholarship and the Nazi weltanschauung.

Understanding the underlying *völkisch* commonalities within the practice and products of Haithabu scholarship also helps us explain more fully the conflict among German scholars for control of the Haithabu project. Typically, the strife between Jankuhn and Reinerth has been portrayed as a struggle between a respected scholar and a discredited opportunist that played out in the context of a contested polycratic system. In his recollections, Jankuhn remembered that "ninety-five percent of prehistorians were arrayed against Reinerth."[76] If this is so, then we might expect to see comments on the quality of Reinerth's scholarship. After all, Reinerth's own studies of the "Germanization" of modern-day Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg used the older *Siedlungsarchäologie*,[77] which Jankuhn stressed "was no longer current" in the field.[78] Yet a review of Jankuhn's papers reveals that scholarship played a surprisingly small role in the dispute with Reinerth. While Jankuhn and his allies maintained that Reinerth "possessed . . . neither as a person *nor as a scholar* the characteristics . . . to play a leading role in the reorganization of prehistoric and early medieval archaeology,"[79] they generally confined their attacks to issues related to political loyalty and ideological conformity. For example, Jankuhn sent defamatory letters showing that his rival Reinerth had maintained a collegial relationship with the archaeologist Gerhard Bersu, despite knowing that he had a Jewish background. Other scholars, including Carl Schuchhardt, complained about Reinerth's attacks on classical archaeology, which even Reinerth's supporters questioned as a blatantly political move at odds with scholarly practice. For his part, Reinerth helped raise questions about Jankuhn's loyalty to the Nazi state and accused Gustav Schwantes of having ties to the freemasons.[80] As Eric Kurlander demonstrates in his contribution to this volume, these sorts of defamatory statements were fairly typical among esoteric or border-scientific thinkers in the Third Reich as a means of discrediting their opponents. But despite their deep personal and professional disagreements, Jankuhn and Reinerth appear to have been more circumspect about attacking the other's work, and we would suggest that this was because of the close relationship between scholarship and weltanschauung that the two men seemed to have in common. Jankuhn could hardly point out the flaws in Reinerth's research into ancient Germans, because doing so would call into question the inherent qualities of the German *Volk* and thereby cast doubt on Jankuhn's own loyalties. It was, in short, impossible to attack the methods without implicating the resulting interpretations.

Conclusion: Scientific Knowledge in the Nazi Regime

Having examined the characteristics of Nazi and SS research in general, and the Nazi-era excavations at Haithabu in particular, we return to the question of how to characterize the knowledge produced at the site. In our assessment, we might refer to three characteristics that the philosopher Philip Kitcher has identified as hallmarks of pseudoscience.[81] The first is the tendency of pseudoscience to ask wrong questions that either do not relate to empirical knowledge or that amount to a circular argument. Certainly, the racially substantiated vitalism of early medieval archaeology in Germany led scholars to pose questions outside the bounds of empirical study. In particular, the archaeologists working at Haithabu employed scientific methods to prove that the site was the domain of a superior culture of ancient and medieval Germans. While Jankuhn and his mentors attempted to place archaeological determinations of ethnic origins on a sound empirical footing using comparative and interdisciplinary approaches, they failed to address a central epistemological flaw, which was that their field was asking questions that conflated metaphysics and science. They failed to understand that categories such as *Volk* and *Rasse* taken as "real phenomena" do not derive from scientific thinking, but from assumptions underlying belief systems and cultural values. The scientification of such racial-metaphysical and esoteric elements thus preserved normative assumptions, such as the vitalist belief that the character of a *Volk* was internalized in its blood,[82] that could not be proven with the instruments of research. This is not just a modern interpretation, but was highly contested at the time, especially by scholars from other countries, such as France, Belgium, or Switzerland. So, in this regard, Kitcher's criterion suggests that the Haithabu project was grounded in principles that even some contemporaries would have labeled as pseudoscientific.

Here we should point out that the origins of the archaeologists' questions lay not with Nazi ideology but with much older intellectual traditions. Indeed, humanities and social science scholars working from a *völkisch* or racial perspective not only utilized contemporary racial-biologistic theory, but also hearkened back to the musings of German intellectuals like Johann Gottfried Herder on the essential particularities of different peoples. For this reason, Kitcher's second characteristic, namely that pseudoscience does not represent a coherent scientific complex of epistemology, ontology, and argumentation,[83] is a bit more complicated in the case of German archaeologists who advocated *völkisch* ideology. Even if the basis of Jankuhn's constructions was predominantly ideological (*weltanschaulich*), these constructions emerged from within a broader historical context in which such epistemologies within the sciences and humanities were more broadly accepted as part of a legitimate system.

Martin Heidegger, arguing against Ernst Cassirer at the famous 1929 Davos conference, for example, did not separate weltanschauung from philosophical thinking anymore, in contrast to Cassirer's neo-Kantian school of thought.[84] By the time the Nazis came to power, *völkisch* ideological and worldview-knowledge represented a scientific paradigm rarely questioned by German scholars, particularly by the younger, politically radicalized researchers in the humanities and social sciences.[85]

Kitcher's third criterion posits that pseudoscience ignores established scientific insights and discoveries in order to advocate and defend ideas long since discredited by reputable scholars. Scientists working in this way typically do not take part in scientific debates or build their research in dialogue with established knowledge.[86] This tendency appears not to apply to the Haithabu project. Not only did the researchers at the site continue to engage international scholars throughout the 1930s, but they also sought to differentiate their work from the older, less methodologically advanced theories of Reinerth and the Kossinna school. As a result, Jankuhn managed to achieve a higher degree of respectability among his peers both before and after the Second World War. In contrast to Reinerth, Jankuhn was much more successful in reclaiming a place in German academia on the basis of his past research, earning in the 1950s a professorship at the University of Göttingen. Such a return to the field came in spite of the fact that his service in the SS had included criminal acts of looting in eastern Europe and had concluded with a stint as an intelligence officer in the *Waffen-SS*.[87] Yet the different outcomes for Reinerth and Jankuhn should not lead us to overlook the ways in which their work, though methodologically different, shared a common epistemological foundation. Rather, they should remind us of the degree to which the system in which both scholars worked was deemed legitimate within the German academic community.

The knowledge produced at Haithabu during the 1930s and early 1940s was not just the result of a scientification or rationalization or irrational thoughts. Nor was it simply a matter of dividing ideologized "popular knowledge" from "hard scientific facts."[88] Finally, it is impossible simply to label the research as pseudoscientific. Rather, the research results reflected a style of scientific thought that opposed a starkly rational epistemology because it was rooted in the assumption that vestiges of unknown or mystic elements should remain within the epistemologies of the sciences and humanities. Occult, mythic, and religious elements were not side effects of this particular epistemology, but lay at its core and explicitly informed the goals of *völkisch* and "Nazi science." The result was an ontologization of ideological views, such as the "eternal values" of the *Volk* and the "vital and cultural superiority of the Germanic race." From a normative, rationalist point of view, such a system must be considered unscientific, but from a relativist perspective, they appear to fit within the bounds of the scientific field in Germany and beyond during

the early and mid-twentieth century. This explains why Jankuhn and his colleagues were able to produce factual knowledge about Haithabu by using highly developed techniques during the Nazi era. It also explains how Jankuhn managed after the war to preserve these very elements of his work as he shifted his broader research questions and divorced his research from its *völkisch* and ideological roots.

Notes

[1] Michael D. Gordin, *The Pseudoscience Wars: Immanuel Velikowsky and the Birth of the Modern Fringe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 2.

[2] See, for example, Uwe Puschner and G. Ulrich Grossmann, eds., *Völkisch und national: Zur Aktualität alter Denkmuster im 21. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009).

[3] Michael Hagner, "Bye-bye Science, Welcome pseudoscience? Reflexionen über einen beschädigten Status," in *Pseudowissenschaft: Konzeption von Nichtwissenschaftlichkeit in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, ed. Dirk Rupnow, Veronika Lipphardt, Jens Thietl, and Christina Wessely (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 21–50.

[4] For science, see Mitchell G. Ash, "Wissenschaft und Politik als Ressourcen für einander," in *Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftspolitik: Bestandsaufnahmen zu Formationen, Brüchen und Kontinuitäten im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Rüdiger vom Bruch and Brigitte Kaderas (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002), 32–51. For the humanities and social sciences, see Wolfang Bialas and Anson Rabinbach, eds., *Nazi Germany and the Humanities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Jürgen Elvert and Jürgen Nielsen-Sikora, eds., *Kulturwissenschaften und Nationalsozialismus* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2008); Frank-Rutger Hausmann, *Die Geisteswissenschaften im "Dritten Reich"* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2011).

[5] Hausmann, *Die Geisteswissenschaften*, 99–118, 521–60.

[6] Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung: Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine europäische Ordnung* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Kampe, 1991), 50–68; Michael Grüttner, "Wissenschaftspolitik im Nationalsozialismus," in *Geschichte der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus: Bestandsaufnahme und Perspektiven der Forschung*, ed. Doris Kaufmann (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2000), 557–85.

[7] See Gunter Scholtz, *Zwischen Wissenschaftsanspruch und Orientierungsbedürfnis: Zu Grundlage und Wandel der Geisteswissenschaften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991).

[8] Jürgen Kocka, "Ideological Regression and Methodological Innovation: Historiography and the Social Sciences in the 1930s and 1940s," *History and Memory* 2 (1990): 130–38. See also Reinhart Koselleck, "Sozialgeschichte und Begriffsgeschichte," in *Sozialgeschichte in Deutschland: Entwicklungen und Perspektiven im internationalen Zusammenhang*, 2 vols., ed. Wolfgang Schieder and Volker Sellin (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 89–109.

[9] Willi Oberkrome, "Reformansätze in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft der Zwischenkriegszeit," in *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung*, ed. Michael

Prinz and Rainer Zitelmann (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991), 216–38; James van Horn Melton and Winfried Schulze, eds., *Paths of Continuity: Central Europe Historiography from the 1930s to the 1950s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Winfried Schulze, "Der Wandel zum Allgemeinen: Der Weg deutscher Historiker nach 1945 zur Kategorie des Sozialen," in *Teil und Ganzes: Zum Verhältnis von Einzel- und Gesamtanalyse in Geschichte und Sozialwissenschaft*, ed. Karl Acham and Winfried Schulze (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1990), 193–216.

[10] See Riccardo Bavaj, *Die Ambivalenz der Moderne im Nationalsozialismus: Eine Bilanz der Forschung* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003).

[11] Axel Flügel, "Ambivalente Innovation: Anmerkungen zur Volksgeschichte," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 26 (2000): 653–71.

[12] Gadi Algazi, "Otto Brunner: 'Konkrete Ordnung' und Sprache der Zeit," in *Geschichtsschreibung als Legitimationswissenschaft 1918–1945*, ed. Peter Schöttler (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 166–203.

[13] Michael Fahlbusch, *Wissenschaft im Dienst der nationalsozialistischen Politik? Die "Volksdeutschen Forschungsgemeinschaften" von 1931–1945* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1999); Michael Fahlbusch and Ingo Haar, eds., *Wissenschaftliche Politikberatung im 20. Jahrhundert, völkische Expertise und 'Neuordnung' Europas* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010); Carsten Klingemann, *Soziologie und Politik: Sozialwissenschaftliches Expertenwissen im Dritten Reich und in der frühen westdeutschen Nachkriegszeit* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009).

[14] See Bruce G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 12–14; David Clark and Bob Chapman, *Analytical Archaeology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 34–42.

[15] For the history of the *SS-Ahnenerbe*, see Michael H. Kater, *Das "Ahnenerbe" der SS 1933–1945: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte des Dritten Reiches*, 4th ed. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2006). On Jankuhn, see Heiko Steuer, "Herbert Jankuhn: SS-Karriere und Ur- und Frühgeschichte," in *Nationalsozialismus in den Kulturwissenschaften*, 2 vols., ed. Hartmut Lehmann and Otto Gerhard Oexle (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 447–529. More critical is Dirk Mahrsarski, *Herbert Jankuhn (1905–1990): Ein deutscher Prähistoriker zwischen nationalsozialistischer Ideologie und wissenschaftlicher Objektivität* (Rahden/Westfalen: VML Verlag Marie Leidorf, 2011).

[16] Sophus Müller, *Nordische Altertumskunde: Nach Funden und Denkmälern aus Dänemark und Schleswig*, vol. 2 (Strasbourg: Karl J. Trübner, 1898), 234–36; Joachim Stark, *Haithabu-Schleswig-Danewerk: Aspekte einer Forschungsgeschichte mittelalterlicher Anlagen In Schleswig-Holstein* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1988), 9–13.

[17] Rudolph Frercks, "Das Schädelmaterial von Haithabu: Ausgrabungen von 1902 bis 1910" (PhD diss., Christian-Albrechts Universität zu Kiel, 1934), 5.

[18] Volker Hilberg, Personal Communication, March 18, 2004. Hilberg has been field director of the excavations at the Haithabu site since 2002.

[19] Johannes Heinßen, *Historismus und Kulturkritik: Studien zur Geschichtskultur im späten 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

[20] Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *Max Weber's "Science as a Vocation,"* ed. Peter Lassman and Irving Velody (Boston: Unwin, 1989), 13.

[21] Betty J. T. Dobbs, *The Janus Faces of Genius: The Role of Alchemy in Newton's Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[22] See Joshua Landy and Michael Saler, eds. *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

[23] See Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Krise des Historismus—Krise der Wirklichkeit: Eine Problemgeschichte der Moderne," in *Krise des Historismus—Krise der Wirklichkeit: Wissenschaft, Kunst und Literatur 1880–1932*, ed. Otto Gerhard Oexle (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 11–116.

[24] Gustaf Kossinna, *Die Herkunft der Germanen: Zur Methode der Siedlungsarchäologie*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Carl Kabitzsch, 1920), 3–4.

[25] Ulrich Veit, "Gustaf Kossinna and His Concept of a National Archaeology," in *Archaeology, Ideology, and Society: The German Experience*, ed. Heinrich Härke (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), 40–64.

[26] Andrew D. Evans, *Anthropology at War: World War I and the Science of Race in Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 190–91.

[27] Gustaf Kossinna, *Das Weichselland: Ein uralter Heimatboden der Germanen*, 3rd ed. (Danzig: Kafeman, 1919).

[28] See Heidi Gansohr-Meinel, *Fragen an das Volk: Der Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde, 1928–1940: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte einer Institution* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1993).

[29] Otto Scheel and Peter Paulsen, *Quellen zur Frage Schleswig-Haithabu im Rahmen der fränkischen, sächsischen und nordischen Beziehungen* (Kiel: Mühlau, 1930), vii.

[30] Gustav Schwantes, "Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu: Vortragsbericht," *Zeitschrift für Ethnographie* 63 (1931): 239.

[31] Kurt Schietzel, *Stand der siedlungsarchäologischen Forschung in Haithabu: Ergebnisse und Probleme* (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 1981), 61–68.

[32] Paul Leuchsenring, *Haithabu: Nordisches Schauspiel in 7 Bildern* (Schleswig: J. Bergas, 1931).

[33] Heinar Schilling, *Haithabu: Ein germanisches Troja* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1935).

[34] See Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and Violence through the German Dictatorships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Thomas A. Kohut, *A German Generation: An Experiential History of the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012); Michael Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office*, trans. Tom Lampert (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010).

[35] See Ingo Haar, "'Volksgeschichte' und Königsberger Milieu: Forschungsprogramme zwischen Weimarer Revisionspolitik und nationalsozialistischer Vernichtungsplanung," in Lehmann and Oexle, *Nationalsozialismus in den Kulturwissenschaften*, 169–209.

[36] Steuer, "Herbert Jankuhn," 469; Mahrsarski, *Herbert Jankuhn*, 36.

[37] Reported in Herbert Jankuhn, Military Government of Germany Fragebogen, undated, in Herbert Jankuhn Nachlass, Schleswig-Holsteinisches Archäologisches Landesmuseum.

[38] Michael Gebühr, "Gustav Schwantes und die Ethnogenese der Germanen" (paper presented at "'Eine hervorragend nationale Wissenschaft': Arbeitsgespräch im Rahmen des Sonderforschungsbereichs 541," Freiburg, July 2–3, 1999), 1.

[39] Veit, "Gustaf Kossinna," 45.

[40] Gebühr, "Gustav Schwantes," 18.

[41] Hoover Institution Archives, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Box No. 1: Report on Dr. Helmuth Arntz of the Führer der Dozentenschaft der Universität Bonn, sgd. Schmidt, undated; National Socialist German League of Professors, The Reichsamtsleiter to W. Greite [Notgemeinschaft] regarding Dr. Josef Antweiler, April 9, 1936. Also see Michael Grüttner, "Wissenschaftspolitik im Nationalsozialismus," in *Geschichte der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus: Bestandsaufnahme und Perspektiven der Forschung*, ed. Doris Kaufmann (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2000), 557–85.

[42] Jankuhn, Fragebogen.

[43] See Jerry Z. Muller, *The Other God That Failed: Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 94, 104–5. According to Muller, the sociologist Hans Freyer (1887–1969) believed that research had to have a purpose, since the communities sociologists analyzed were invariably founded on the will to achieve an aim. Only by taking up a subjective position, he argued, could social scientists explore the intentions and mechanisms at work in the building of society.

[44] See Anne Harrington, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 46; Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 124–27. Also see Michael Hampe, "Alles ist relativ: Einsteins 'philosophische' Feinde," in *Einstein on the Beach: Der Physiker als Phänomen*, ed. Michael Hagner (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005), 57–78; Carsten Könneker, "'Katastrophal für bürgerliche Hirne': Relativitätstheorie und völkische Propaganda in der Weimarer Republik," in Hagner, *Einstein on the Beach.*, 79–95.

[45] Bernard Mees, "Hitler and Germanentum," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 2 (2004): 257–62.

[46] See Ingo Haar and Michael Fahlbusch, eds., *German Scholars and Ethnic Cleansing* (New York: Berghahn, 2005).

[47] See Willi Oberkrome, *Ordnung und Autarkie: Die Geschichte der deutschen Landbauforschung, Agrarökonomie und ländlichen Sozialwissenschaft im Spiegel von Forschungsdienst und DFG (1920–1970)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2009), 104.

[48] Heather Pringle, *The Master Plan: Himmler's Scholars and the Holocaust* (New York: Hyperion, 2006), 63–76.

[49] Michael Shermer, *The Borderlands of Science: When Sense Meets Nonsense* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.

[50] A well-known example of such a thought style is Carl Schmitt. See Gopal Balakrishnan, *The Enemy: An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt* (London: Verso, 2000), 267.

[51] Central Library Solothurn, NL TAT_E 1.13: Alban Gerster to Eugen Tatarinoff, July 5, 1933.

[52] Grüttner, "Wissenschaftspolitik im Nationalsozialismus," 569–71.

[53] Federal Archive of Germany, R 26/III 1, fol. 2–4: Abschrift. Bildung eines Reichsforschungsrats, sgd. Rust, March 16, 1937.

[54] Sören Flachowsky, *Von der Notgemeinschaft zum Reichsforschungsrat: Wissenschaftspolitik im Kontext von Autarkie, Aufrüstung und Krieg* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2008), 232.

[55] Kater, *Ahnenerbe*, 58.

[56] Federal Archive of Germany, NS 21/676: Das Ahnenerbe to the Bayerische Motoren Werke, June 11, 1937; Das Ahnenerbe to the Daimler-Benz AG z. Hd. des Vorsitzenden des Aufsichtsrates Herrn Staatsrat Dr. Dr. von Stauss, January 18, 1938; Das Ahnenerbe to the Deutsche Rentenbank-Kreditanstalt, July 12, 1937; Bruno Galke an Emil Georg von Stauss, Deutsche Bank und Disconto-Gesellschaft, May 15, 1937.

[57] Akten-Notiz Besprechung zwischen der Rektor der Christian-Albrechts-Universität Georg Dahm, Paul Ritterbusch, Gustav Schwantes, Peter Paulsen und Herbert Jankuhn, undated, Schleswig-Holsteinisches Archäologisches Landesmuseum.

[58] Reinhard Bollmus, *Das Amt Rosenberg und seine Gegner. Studien zum Machtkampf im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2006), 211.

[59] Steuer, "Herbert Jankuhn," 465.

[60] Herbert Jankuhn, *Haithabu: Eine germanische Stadt der Frühzeit*, 2nd ed. (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz, 1938), 14.

[61] Jankuhn, *Haithabu*, 196.

[62] Mahrsarski, *Herbert Jankuhn*, 81–87, 107–13, 149–50.

[63] Herbert Jankuhn, *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu: Vorläufiger Grabungsbericht* (Berlin-Dahlem: Ahnenerbe-Stiftung Verlag, 1943), 10, 16.

[64] Jankuhn, *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu*, 26–36.

[65] Jankuhn, *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu*, 89–205.

[66] Jankuhn, *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu*,103–7.

[67] Jankuhn, *Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu*, 216–17.

[68] Herbert Jankuhn, "Die Gürtelgarnituren der älteren römischen Kaiserzeit im Samlande," *Prussia* 30 (1933): 166; Herbert Jankuhn, "Zur Besiedlung des Samlandes in der älteren römischen Kaiserzeit," *Prussia* 30 (1933): 216-17. See Mahrsarski, *Herbert Jankuhn*, 91-93, 99-100, 171.

[69] Jankuhn, *Haithabu*, 3.

[70] Kater, *Ahnenerbe*, 157.

[71] Gustav Schwantes, "Eidesstattliche Erklärung," April 16, 1947, Herbert Jankuhn Nachlass, GB 15.

[72] Günther Haseloff, "Eidesstattliche Erklärung," June 12, 1947, Herbert Jankuhn Nachlass GB 15.

[73] Mahrsarski, *Herbert Jankuhn*, 78.

[74] Gunter Schöbel, "Hans Reinerth: Forscher–NS Funktionär–Museumsleiter," in *Prähistorie und Nationalsozialismus: Die mittel- und osteuropäische Ur- und Frühgeschichtsforschung in den Jahren 1933–1945*, ed. Achim Leube and Morten Hegewisch (Heidelberg: Synchron, 2002), 321–96.

[75] See Anja Heuss, *Kunst- und Kulturgutraub: Eine vergleichende Studie zur Besatzungspolitik der Nationalsozialisten in Frankreich und der Sowjetunion* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2000), 219–38.

[76] Herbert Jankuhn, personal communication to Michael Kater, May 14, 1963, recorded in Jankuhn Nachlass, GB 27.

[77] Katharina Krall, "Prähistorie im Nationalsozialismus: Ein Vergleich der Schriften von Herbert Jankuhn und Hans Reinerth zwischen 1933 und 1939" (master's thesis, University of Constance, 2005), 55.

[78] Jankuhn, personal communication to Kater, May 14, 1963.

[79] Walther Veeck, "Zur Characteristik des Prof. Dr. Hans Reinerth," undated, Jankuhn Nachlass, GB 21. Jankuhn included this account as an attachment to his comments related to Reinerth's dispute with Gustav Schwantes. Emphasis added.

[80] Bollmus, *Das Amt Rosenberg*, 171–75.

[81] Also see Gordin, *The Pseudoscience Wars*, 10–12.

[82] See Peter Schöttler, "Von der rheinischen Landesgeschichte zur nazistischen Volksgeschichte, oder Die 'unhörbare Stimme des Blutes,'" in *Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Winfried Schulze and Otto Gerhard Oexle (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), 89–112; Peter Schöttler, "Die intellektuelle Rheingrenze: Wie lassen sich die französische Annales und die NS-Volksgeschichte vergleichen?" in *Die Nation schreiben: Geschichtswissenschaft im internationalen Vergleich*, ed. Christoph Conrad and Sebastian Conrad (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 271–95.

[83] Philip Kitcher, "Darwins Herausforderer: Über Intelligent Design oder: Woran man Pseudowissenschaftler erkennt," in Rupnow et al., *Pseudowissenschaft*, 428.

[84] Peter E. Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 52–64.

[85] On the concept of the scientific paradigm, see Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Phoenix, 1962).

[86] Kitcher, "Darwins Herausforderer," 430–31.

[87] Jankuhn, Fragebogen.

[88] Mahrsarski, *Herbert Jankuhn*, 78.

6: Hitler's Supernatural Sciences: Astrology, Anthroposophy, and World Ice Theory in the Third Reich

Eric Kurlander

Introduction

While many occult figures and groups were surveilled or policed by the Third Reich, a closer look at Nazi policies suggests a more complex picture.[1] Reflecting back on the first eight years of the Third Reich, the Nazis' chief ideologist, Alfred Rosenberg, wrote, "The success of National Socialism, the unique appearance of the Führer, has no precedent in German History. . . . The consequence . . . is that many Germans, due to their proclivity for the romantic and the mystical, indeed the occult, came to understand the success of National Socialism in this fashion."[2] For Germans, Rosenberg suggests, esoteric thinking was perfectly compatible with, perhaps even intrinsic to, Nazism. This may explain why the multiple waves of arrest, detention, and murder that defined the experience of so many Communists, Jews, and "asocials" during the first few years of the Third Reich failed to envelop practitioners of occultism. Nor did the outbreak of war in September 1939 lead to the systematic eradication of esoteric practitioners as it did to Jews, Gypsies, or the mentally and physically disabled. To the contrary, as Uwe Schellinger, Andreas Anton, and Michael Schetsche's contribution to this volume indicates, the Nazi regime employed occultism "pragmatically" throughout the war, recruiting astrologers and clairvoyants to provide military and diplomatic intelligence both before and after the May 1941 Hess affair.

Except the Third Reich's interest in occult and border-scientific (*grenzwissenschaftlich*) doctrines—what I call Hitler's supernatural sciences—extended far beyond a few pragmatic "experiments" conducted during the Second World War. As an antidote to "Jewish" physics, Nazi leaders sponsored Hans Hörbiger's world ice theory, which postulated that events in the Bible and the putative destruction of Atlantis were caused by moons of ice hitting the Earth. Multiple Reich officials advocated Rudolf Steiner's occult-inspired ("biodynamic") approach to agriculture, based on the moon and planets' cosmic rhythms. Finally, both

astrology and divining were employed widely to obtain political insights and spread propaganda. Certainly many proponents of these supernatural sciences faced renewed interrogation and arrest in the wake Rudolf Hess's flight to England in May 1941, which was widely attributed to the deputy führer's immersion in occult doctrines.[3] Even after the so-called Special Action Hess, however, the regime continued to experiment with multiple supernatural sciences.

Indeed, as Link and Hare suggest in their own contribution to this volume, what has often been castigated as Nazi "pseudoscience" might on second glance be characterized as a genuine openness in the Third Reich to supernatural or border science in both interdisciplinary and epistemological terms—to wanting to move beyond disciplinary boundaries as well as the "soulless" materialism many Nazis associated with mainstream science. If the Third Reich's investment in border-scientific research reflects a proclivity for interdisciplinarity and unconventional thinking, however, it also helped to propagate and reinforce Nazi conceptions of race, politics, and empire. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the epistemological foundations and ideological implications of this border-scientific approach through case studies of three of the most prominent supernatural sciences in the Third Reich: astrology, biodynamic agriculture, and world ice theory.

Astrology

A year before the Nazi seizure of power, in the waning months of the Weimar Republic, the thirty-year-old Swiss astrologer Karl Krafft asked Hans Bender, a twenty-five-year-old PhD student in psychology at the University of Bonn, whether "real, that is, unfalsified astrological . . . knowledge can be made accessible to a broader public" or whether it was something that could only be pursued in "concealed form."[4] Bender was equally concerned about the prospects of the border sciences in the face of an increasingly professionalized scientific establishment. For disciplines like parapsychology, astrology, and pendulum dowsing to survive, Bender reasoned, it was urgent that they be recognized by mainstream science.[5]

Four years later—and three years after Hitler's seizure of power—Bender had become much more optimistic. Barely able to contain his enthusiasm, the young parapsychologist encouraged Krafft to recognize the enormous potential for research on the border sciences in the Third Reich, especially "scientific astrology."[6] Little did Bender know when he wrote Krafft in the mid-1930s that he would eventually be chosen to head his own institute on border sciences at the newly established Reich University of Strasbourg in 1942.[7] Nor could Krafft have imagined that he would be recruited by Josef Goebbels three years later to lead a counterpropaganda campaign against the allies, eventually working for both the SS and military intelligence.[8]

The career trajectories of these two leading German occultists does nothing to diminish the negative experience of many astrologers in the Third Reich. Like other Germans, astrologers suffered increased surveillance, "coordination" of their professional life, and by the late 1930s often the elimination of their organizations. Already early on, the regime instituted a ban on commercial forms of astrology in Berlin—the center of popular astrology in Germany—and began confiscating astrological periodicals, particularly ones containing political predictions or horoscopes of leading Nazis (a cottage industry in the late Weimar Republic and early years of the Third Reich). In 1937 the German Astrological Society (Astrologische Gesellschaft in Deutschland, or AgiD) would be forced to disband, and most of its rival organizations were eliminated soon after. Both the major astrological periodicals, *Zenit* and *Astrologische Rundschau*, would cease publication in 1938.[9]

Lest we blame the Third Reich's uneven imposition of legal restrictions against popular astrology on Nazi "antioccultism," however, it is important to emphasize two things. First, we need to remember that, despite these legal restrictions, the Gestapo did very little to police astrologers before Hess's flight in May 1941. Meanwhile, in 1939, two years after the first "bans" on astrological periodicals, three such papers still had circulations approaching the thousands in Saxony alone and the Reich continued to approve the publication of astrological calendars well into the war.[10] At the same time, we must acknowledge the role played by leading astrologers, who vociferously attacked each other for practicing "unscientific" astrology—a pattern of mutual recrimination and professional boundary-marking that extended back to Imperial Germany but had particularly deleterious consequences under a regime that was only too willing to outlaw those who appeared to be working against the "racial community," as angry astrologers ofen accused their opponents of doing. On the other hand, it was professional astrologers' insistence that "scientific astrology" should be permitted—as opposed to the "charlatanism" of popular astrology—that facilitated the rise to prominence of individuals like Krafft and Bender, whose esoteric research, while clearly on the margins of mainstream science, was deemed sufficiently rigorous by many Nazis.[11] The question is not whether astrology was taken seriously among the leaders of the Third Reich, but to what extent and in what ways it was deployed.

To begin with, it is important to reiterate how fundamentally popular and widespread the belief was among working and middle class Germans that one could glean hidden knowledge from reading the stars and planets or from uncovering hidden forces operating in everyday life—what Bender and Krafft called the "border fields" (*Grenzgebiete*) of the sciences. As Corinna Treitel has convincingly shown, thousands of Germans participated in astrological societies, séances, and spiritual experiments

during the interwar period, while hundreds of thousands more purchased occult, New Age, and other esoteric literature.[12] As G. Szeszcny put it in his 1940 Munich dissertation on the occult press, "The general cultural and economic collapse, inflation and the ensuing big political and social crises . . . prepared the way for the occult" in its most widespread and popular form in interwar Germany.[13] It is therefore no coincidence that many of the important figures in founding the early Nazi Party, from Rudolf von Sebottendorf and Wilhelm Gutberlet to Rudolf Hess, Ernst Roehm, and Heinrich Himmler, were fascinated by astrology.[14] Just as significant, many of Germany's most famous astrologers, clairvoyants, dowsers, and parapsychologists continued to enjoy professional success and an ample reading public after 1933. From Bender and Krafft to Gerda Walther, H. H. Kritzinger, Ludwig Straniak, and Wilhelm Wulff, even those astrologers and parapsychologists whose commercial publications were eventually curtailed would end up working for the regime at some point during the Second World War.[15]

What distinguished these esotericists from many "popular" astrologers, of course, was the putatively scientific nature of their work. Kritzinger, for instance, was a reputable physicist who led an important research institute on military matters. This lent his multiple experiments with cosmic and subterranean "death rays" that could only be located with divining rods the imprimatur of reputable science.[16] Kritizinger's future colleague in the wartime Pendulum Institute, Ludwig Straniak, was viewed by colleagues as "the most serious researcher" in the new scientific field of dowsing.[17] The astrologer and religious mystic Gerda Walther had earned a PhD in philosophy and was research assistant to the renowned parapsychologist Schrenk-Notzing in the 1920s.[18] Perhaps the most prominent astrologer to work for the regime besides Krafft was Himmler's "personal astrologer" Wilhelm Wulff, whom the Reichsführer praised for his serious "scientific" approach to astrology.[19] All these individuals would at some point encounter difficulties in pursuing their interests after 1933. It is nonetheless one of the major paradoxes of occultism in the Third Reich that leading practitioners of perhaps the most infamous border science—astrology—would find greatest political prominence during the Second World War, at the precise moment that other ostensibly dangerous elements (e.g., Jews, Gypsies, Bolsheviks, the mentally and physically disabled) experienced the greatest persecution.[20]

The first astrologer to come to prominence during the war was Krafft. Like many astrologers, Krafft was enthusiastic about the Third Reich and made some efforts to earn the trust of the regime through his published horoscopes.[21] By late 1939, Krafft had apparently made the acquaintance of the Nazi Labor Minister Robert Ley and Justice Minister Hans Frank, himself a member of the occult-infused Thule Society.[22] Among the favorable horoscopes Krafft published during the 1930s in order

to ingratiate himself with the regime, none was more important than a seemingly accurate prediction of the assassination attempt on Hitler by Georg Elser in November 1939. It is this horoscope, which Krafft had sent to the authorities shortly before the attempt, that brought Krafft to the attention of Goebbels. Wanting to control public opinion, which continued to pay close attention to horoscopes, Goebbels' first reaction was to ban all astrological journals (earlier bans had been partial), particularly those making political predictions along the lines of Krafft's.[23]

Goebbels' next move, however, was to approach the renowned astrologer and dowsing expert Kritzinger about heading a division within the Reich Ministry of Propaganda producing pamphlets to counter the anti-German Nostradamus prophecies being spread by the Allies. As the full-time director of a research institute, Kritzinger recommended hiring his colleague Krafft as well, who was living hand to mouth in Berlin, writing reports for SS intelligence.[24] After eventually acquiescing to Goebbels' offer, Kritzinger, Krafft, and another well-known astrologer, Georg Lucht, went to work on the quatrains. But instead of producing propaganda, they debated points of astrological interpretation, such as whether "the great duc of Armenia" in Quatrain V was Stalin, the German tribal leader Arminius, or Hitler himself. When Goebbels finally propagated their findings in France and Great Britain, they had little impact on foreign public opinion.[25] SS Intelligence Chief Walter Schellenberg nonetheless acknowledged their domestic political value since Germans, "who are well-informed in occult matters," remained susceptible to fake horoscopes propagated by the British.[26]

Astrology had purposes beyond the mere manipulation of public opinion. As Krafft wrote to Bender in March 1940, "About the prospects of border sciences in *our* generation, I'm not as pessimistic as you—especially in government circles they are *seeking* people who not only have something to say, but also can be taken seriously in terms of character."[27] Just as the war paved the way for unorthodox military strategies and freed up previously bottled-up economic energies, it led to a greater willingness than ever to experiment with supernatural sciences like astrology and divining.[28] Himmler was in fact enthusiastic enough about the possibilities of scientific astrology to ask the astronomer and amateur astrologist Kurd Kisshauer, an associate of Alfred Rosenberg, to review the talents of prominent German astrologers, the "best" of whom the Reichsführer hoped to employ in gathering military intelligence, carrying out psychological warfare and eliciting foreign policy advice.[29]

Even Rudolf Hess's infamous flight to Scotland in May 1941, which unleashed a brief wave of antioccult activity, signaled less the final attack on the "supernatural sciences" in the Third Reich than the culmination of Himmler and other Nazis' attempts to control, coordinate, and co-opt such ideas for themselves.[30] To be sure, the *Sicherheitsdienst* (Security

Service; SD) and Gestapo arrested or interrogated hundreds of astrologers and confiscated thousands of occult publications, a large number of which dealt directly with astrology.[31] Within weeks of Special Action Hess, however, most of these astrologers had been released after questioning. The longer-term detentions were reserved either for a minority of political opponents, such as Hess's friends Ernst Schulte-Strathaus and Albrecht Haushofer, or "scientific astrologers," including Krafft, Wulff, and Walther, whose services were now to be employed exclusively by the regime.[32] Walther herself notes that many Nazi leaders continued to employ horoscopes and other occult practices after 1941 and suggests that her brief imprisonment was more likely connected to her support for the *Christengemeinschaft* (Christian community), a successor organization to anthroposophy, rather than to her interest in astrology.[33] Equally indicative of the regime's open-minded attitude toward the supernatural sciences is the fact that Hans Bender got the SS to provide him a sixty-two-page list of—and eventually to loan him—confiscated astrological publications, which he put to use in his newly opened "Paracelsus Institute" for research on the border sciences in Strasbourg.[34]

Whether fearing its abuse or wanting to use occultism for its own purposes, the regime evidently had an abiding interest in the powers of astrology and divining. In 1942, Navy Captain Hans Roeder even recommended the creation of a Pendulum Institute "to pinpoint the position of enemy convoys at sea by means of pendulums and other supernatural devices, so that the German submarine flotillas could be certain of sinking them."[35] While Krafft was recruited directly from prison, where he had languished for a time after Special Action Hess, the institute also attracted some of Germany's most respected mathematicians, astronomers, astrologers, mediums, psychics, and radiesthetic (pendulum) practitioners, including Wilhelm Wulff and Ludwig Straniak—the first dowser to claim he could teach lay people how to employ a pendulum to locate large metal objects hundreds of miles away.[36] Importantly, Roeder and his colleagues were inspired in their efforts by the belief that the British were themselves employing esoteric intelligence practices to find and destroy German U-boats. Of course, the British were using quite "natural scientific" methods to locate German ships, namely radar and sonar. Despite the lack of any concrete evidence that astrology or divining could locate ships with similar alacrity, the navy decided to fund the institute regardless.[37]

Although the Pendulum Institute produced few concrete results, it did bring the SS into closer contact with Wilhelm Wulff, perhaps the most important astrologer in the Third Reich and one of Himmler's most trusted advisors. According to Hugh Trevor-Roper, SD Chief Schellenberg discovered Wulff in Hamburg in the early war years and was later introduced to the Reichsführer, whose belief in astrology was

well known, in order for Schellenberg to gain an ally against his rival, SS Chief of Security (RSHA) Ernst Kaltenbrunner.[38] Wulff himself would claim that it was Himmler's personal physician, Felix Kersten, who first introduced him to the Reichsführer based on a favorable horoscope of Hitler. Convinced of the scientific accuracy of Wulff's predictions, Himmler consulted the astrologer for the duration of the war, on everything from health and diet to military and diplomatic advice to the Jewish Question.[39]

Wulff and his occult colleagues were even reassembled by Himmler a year later, in Summer 1943, as part of the famous rescue Operation Oak, organized by Kaltenbrunner and *Waffen-SS* Commander Otto Skorzeny.[40] More skeptical toward the border sciences than some SS functionaries, Schellenberg initially mocked the idea of locating Mussolini through "representatives of the occult sciences," who apparently sat in a castle chosen by Himmler consuming copious amounts of expensive food, drinks, and cigarettes. Yet the otherwise cynical Schellenberg attests in his memoirs that the motley group of astrologers and diviners did somehow help locate Il Duce in a secret hideout south of Rome: "And in all honesty, it must be said, that these dowsers had no contact to the outside world."[41] After the success of Operation Oak, Himmler charged Wulff, Straniak, and company with a number of "scientific" and military tasks beyond astrology—for example, determining whether there was an astrological way to calculate the weather, a question he had world ice theorists explore as well.[42]

So how does one reconcile this high-level interest in astrology and related doctrines, from the SS to the Party Chancellery to the German military, with the arrest and persecution of so many of its practitioners? As suggested above and further illustrated below, it comes down to questions of political control and "scientific" professionalization. Bender, Krafft, Wulff, Straniak, Kritziger—indeed, virtually all the leading astrologers, diviners, and parapsychologists discussed above—agreed with Himmler that most occultists were charlatans who exploited people's gullibility for personal financial gain.[43] As Kisshauer put it in critically evaluating a book, *Son of the Stars*, that attacked popular astrology, "Practical accuracy is a necessary precondition, for otherwise the author can be easily dismissed as laughable in the circles of those who are well-informed in occult matters, whose number is still very large." After delineating the book's lack of astrological rigor, Kisshauer concluded that the author must likewise expurgate remarks critical of world ice theory and its greatest living proponent, Phillip Fauth, "who had just been given an honorary doctorate by the Führer for his service."[44] Thus, even as the regime's attitude to popular astrology became less tolerant after 1937, its investment in "scientific astrology" and other border sciences became increasingly serious, a pattern we see repeated in respect to anthroposophy and world ice theory.

Anthroposophy

The Austrian founder of anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner, began his career as a follower of the Theosophist Madame Blavatsky. He was drawn to her movement because it recognized "a 'truth' that stands above all religions" and sought to uncover "still unexplained natural laws and powers sleeping in human beings," including spiritualism, clairvoyance, and telepathy.[45] In developing anthroposophy shortly before the First World War, Steiner dispensed with some of the more eastern and spiritualist aspects of theosophy. Claiming to be more practical, Steiner sought to help human beings achieve "recognition of higher worlds" through a combination of esotericism and the natural sciences. Steiner and his colleagues encouraged, for instance, experiments in clairvoyance and capturing people's "auras," employing x-rays and microscopes in order to attract the approval of mainstream science. But much like astrology and other supernatural sciences, anthroposophy remained reliant "on aesthetic rather than functional logics" which "prevented the acceptance in the scientific community."[46]

Similar to the closely related field of astrology, the dubious border-scientific claims of anthroposophy did little to dissuade leading National Socialists from trafficking in Steiner's ideas. Many Nazis, to be sure, expressed hostility to Steiner and his doctrines, and the Gestapo would declare the Anthroposophic Society illegal in late 1935. But most of the criticism highlighted Steiner's putatively Jewish, cosmopolitan, and sectarian proclivities, not the supernatural essence of his doctrines.[47] We also need to remember that the ban of the Anthroposophic Society came nearly three years after the Nazi seizure of power and two years after the Third Reich had banned virtually every rival political organization, including conservative nationalist groups that endorsed Hitler's rise to power.

The 1935 ban therefore obscures the reality that many anthrosposophic ideas, practices, and affiliated organizations were permitted to continue. Occult-inclined Nazis still believed after 1935 that Nazism and anthroposophy might come together in a "movement of renewal with totalizing claims."[48] Conversely, many leading anthroposophists were authentically attracted to aspects of National Socialism, having participated before 1933 in the same *völkisch* (racialist)-occult German Order, Thule Society, or Artamanen Society as Hess, Himmler, and other leading Nazis.[49] The Third Reich may have attempted to marginalize anthropsophy as an integrated, sectarian belief system devoted to a rival charismatic führer, namely Rudolf Steiner. But it nonetheless coopted many of its interdisciplinary, border-scientific ideas and practices as an alternative to mainstream natural and social-scientific praxis.

While one sees many points of contact between National Socialism and Steiner's literary, philosophical, and pedagogical work, nowhere were

anthroposophic ideas and practices embraced more systematically than in respect to "biodynamic agriculture [*biodynamische Wirtschaftsweise*]" or BDW.[50] Developed by Steiner toward the end of his career, BDW was based, in the words of Peter Staudenmaier,

> on a holistic view of the farm or garden as an integrated organism comprising soil, plants, animals, and various cosmic forces, with sowing and harvesting conducted according to astrological principles. Biodynamic growers reject monoculture and abjure artificial fertilizers and pesticides, relying instead on manure, compost, and a variety of homeopathic preparations meant to channel the etheric and astral energies of the earth and other celestial bodies.[51]

A protégé of Steiner and BDW's chief proponent in the Third Reich, Erhard Bartsch, formed the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculculture in July 1933, mixing romantic, quasi-mystical language invoking the *völkisch*, "blood and soil" underpinnings of BDW with its practical economic benefits to promote their methods. Very quickly Bartsch managed to enlist the support of individuals like Alwin Seifert, Reich advocate for landscape and arguably the Third Reich's leading environmentalist, as well as pro-BDW Nazi functionaries like Georg Halbe and Hans Merkel who desired independence from foreign-made fertilizer and other scarce industrial chemicals as part of the move toward economic autarchy under Hermann Goering's Four Year Plan.[52] Even Berlin's athletics fields for the 1936 Summer Olympics were treated biodynamically, which garnered so much interest and praise that BDW's continuation was reassured.[53]

As one might expect, the chemical industry and some Nazi leaders with links to big business rejected this "spiritually-aware peasant wisdom" as both economically and ideologically deficient.[54] But Bartsch's clever and concerted propaganda efforts helped BDW spread across many circles, from the interior ministry to the *Wehrmacht*.[55] Influenced by the turn-of-the century "life reform" movement and interwar Artamanen Society, Nazi leaders like Himmler, Rudolf Hess, Walther Darré, and Julius Streicher saw biodynamic agriculture as a natural corollary to their attempts to purify German blood and soil through natural healing, vegetarianism, animal rights, and holistic views toward biology and spirituality.[56] With this goal in mind Hitler's deputy führer, Hess, chastised "industries interested in artificial fertilizer, preoccupied with the height of their dividends" for "carrying out a kind of witch trial against all people who would experiment [with BDW]."[57] The SS, via Otto Ohlendorff, worked closely with Bartsch to get the Interior Ministry to loosen rules against anthroposophy in the late 1930s.[58] Hitler himself admonished the Gestapo to grant amnesty to Masonic lodges in 1938, including former members of Anthrosophic Society like

Bartsch.[59] And by the outbreak of the Second World War, high-ranking party members, such as Rosenberg, Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick, and Minister of Labor Robert Ley had all visited the BDW headquarters and expressed support for the organization.[60]

Perhaps BDW's most consistent supporter was SS-*Obergrüppenführer*, Reich Minister for Food and Agriculture, and SS Office of Race and Settlement (RuSHA) Chief Walther Darré. While economic rationale had much to do with his emerging interest in BDW in the late 1930s—namely the drive toward autarchy in agriculture—Darré's proclivity for the supernatural played an important role.[61] Darré had in fact met his protégé Himmler through their joint membership in the Weimar-era Artamanen Society which, inspired by "esoteric preconceptions" and "Ariosophic and Theosophic ideas," sought to build an agrarian racial utopia in the ethnically mixed eastern parts of the Reich.[62] Further belying Darré's claims that his interest in anthroposophy was purely pragmatic, his correspondence is littered with excerpts from Steiner's writings that have little to do with BDW.[63] Darré's insistence that he "worked to protect the whole endeavor without being a follower of R. Steiner" is probably accurate. But the Reich minister's justifications for BDW—wanting to restore man's organic relationship to God "who works and lives in everything that's essential in this world"—straddled the same lines between science and the supernatural as Steiner's original doctrine.[64] Darré was consequently frustrated by accusations by mainstream thinkers who claimed that BDW emerged from "mysticism, spiritualism, superstition." If biologists could claim that plants grow through "invisible" rays generated by the sun resulting in photosynthesis, then why couldn't they accept the cosmic forces behind BDW?[65]

Having fallen out with Himmler in 1938 and lost his position as head of the RuSHA, Darré's effectiveness in propagating BDW declined.[66] But Bartsch had many other allies in the Nazi Party and especially the SS. Günther Pancke, *SS-Gruppenführer* and Darré's successor as head of the RuSHA, urged Heydrich to allow Bartsch into the SS. When Heydrich rejected this request on the grounds that Bartsch was an unapologetic follower of Rudolf Steiner, Pancke nonetheless wrote Bartsch on behalf of himself and the SS economic expert and concentration camp administrator Oswald Pohl: "I welcome the hope that we can work together closely in the future."[67] In his postwar testimony Otto Ohlendorff likewise indicated that he "found in many branches of [anthroposophic] research valuable suggestions and results that promised to lead out of the impasse in which [the natural sciences] were invested." The spiritual aspects of anthroposophy were equally useful, Ohlendorff reasoned, since "National Socialism had in the short time of its existence [developed] no spiritual education." To be sure, some powerful interests in the Third Reich, especially the chemical industry, had opposed anthroposophy and its practical

uses. It nonetheless "seemed imperative for the overall intellectual development of National Socialism," Ohlendorff concluded, "not to disturb [anthroposophic] research and their institutions, but to leave them in peace, to develop without violent influence from the outside, regardless of the direction of the research."[68]

Hess's flight did represent an important turning point in the regime's relationship to anthroposophy. Encouraged by Darré's rivals Herbert Backe and Martin Bormann, Heydrich took the opportunity to ban the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture and arrest Bartsch.[69] But before we see this action as a move against BDW per se, we need to remember that Bartsch, according to his own SS ally Otto Ohlendorff, "was such a stubborn, uncompromising Anthroposophist in his negotiations with me that he repeatedly threatened my work over the years." Bartsch insisted that "[anthroposophic] methods could be used only by people who were inwardly convinced of the intellectual foundations of these fundamental beliefs" and sought to exploit the sympathies of Ohlendorff and others "not only to enforce biodynamic agriculture" but also to impose "the anthroposophical world view" on everyone in the Third Reich. According to Ohlendorff, Bartsch even tried to bring Steiner's peace proclamation from the First World War to Hitler as the basis for Nazi foreign policy. "Any attempt to explain to him the absurdity of this attempt in the current political situation," Ohlendorff recalls, "and the extreme danger that threatens him and his work . . . were in vain. He was obsessed with . . . Steiner and his ideas."[70]

Given Bartsch's remarkably bold and unapologetic propagation of anthroposophy in the Third Reich, we should hardly be surprised at Heydrich's response to Darré explaining his decision to arrest Bartsch and his colleagues. "The essence of Anthroposophic teaching," Heydrich explained, could provide "no ideology for the entire people, but dangerous sectarian teachings for a narrowly confined circle of people."[71] And yet, despite Bartsch's clear occult proclivities and the SD chief's clear hostility to the occult, Heydrich assured Darré that he would continue to make exceptions for farmers experimenting with BDW provided they were not *also* practicing anthroposophists like Bartsch.[72]

Why Heydrich's efforts to excercise greater restraint in regard to Anthroposophy when he indicated no such nuance in his actions against Communists, Jews, Gypsies, or Jehovah's Witnesses? The answer lies in his superior Heinrich Himmler and other SS leaders' remarkable fascination with BDW even after Hess's flight.[73] Like Hess, Ohlendorff, and Darré, Himmler was interested in BDW out of a combination of his longer-term predisposition toward border-scientific thinking and a practical desire to improve the quality and productivity of German agriculture. "In regard to biological-dynamic fertilization," Himmler wrote, "I can only say: as a farmer I am generally sympathetic." Even if it would be hard to

introduce BDW in the context of technologically intensive modern agriculture, Himmler reasoned, its practitioners should be tolerated.[74]

Himmler's interest in BDW—encouraged by Darré, Pohl, and Ohlendorff—only increased with the prospect of realizing his dreams of racial resettlement in the East.[75] In October 1939, with the invasion of Poland finally underway, Himmler charged Pancke and Pohl to think about "reshap[ing] eastern lands along organic lines," employing anthroposophists like Bartsch as consultants. In cooperation with the new *Deutsche Versuchsanstalt für Ernährung und Verpflegung* (German Research Facility for Food and Nutrition), the SS soon established biodynamic plantations in the eastern territories as well as the Dachau and Ravensbrück concentration camps. Ignoring the protests of Heydrich and Bormann, Himmler directed his SS colleagues to begin purchasing a large amount of products with the anthroposophic copyright (Demeter) from Steiner's pharmaceutical firm, Weleda.[76] In 1940 alone, Hess, Darré, Rosenberg, and Ley all visited Bartsch's farm in Marienhöhe while Pancke and Pohl expressed the desire to begin experimenting with medicinal plants in Dachau.[77]

Beginning with the outbreak of the war, the concentration camp system therefore served not only to eliminate "life unworthy of life" based on border-scientific premises, but also as "part of SS plans to use biodynamic cultivation in the environmental and ethnic reordering of the East."[78] Darré's former protégé Georg Halbe now went to work for the Ministry of the Occupied Eastern Territories and later Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry, where he combined his affinities for BDW and living space to advance German settlement policies. Merkel, still an official for the RuSHA, began publishing a range of pamphlets "combining organic metaphors with calls for expanded German Lebensraum."[79] The former RuSHA functionary and later Commissar for Peasantry and Eastern Territories, Rudi Peuckert, employed his connections to the labor czar Fritz Sauckel to assure that BDW found an audience across the eastern territories. In fact, the use of BDW as part of SS agricultural and (re) settlement plans in the East continued under the leadership of SS men like Seifert and Franz Lippert as well as Agricultural Economics and Forestry Minister Albert Gayl.[80]

Clearly it was never primarily BDW's supernatural provenance or border-scientific approach that caused the Third Reich consternation. It was anthroposophy's roots as an alternative weltanschauung emanating from a rival charismatic führer, Rudolf Steiner.[81] Faced with the dubious ideological loyalties of individuals like Bartsch, the Third Reich exercised a significant level of repression and coordination toward anthroposophic organizations—as they had toward the Christian churches and even rival nationalist groups like the German National People's Party, Pan-German League, and German Christian movement.[82] But this refusal to accept

alternative loyalities did nothing to dissuade leading Nazis from embracing BDW as form of "higher knowledge" that merged empirical methods with spirituality, science, and the supernatural.[83] Similar to what occurred in the case of astrology, the Third Reich sought not to eliminate anthroposophy outright but rather to "coordinate" its supporters while co-opting the elements they deemed useful in achieving their domestic and foreign policy goals.

World Ice Theory

Glacial cosmogony, later known as world ice theory (*Welteislehre* or WEL), was developed in the 1890s by the Austrian scientist and philosopher Hans Hörbiger, who claimed that the idea came to him in a dream. Hörbiger and his collaborator, the amateur astronomer Philip Fauth, posited that much of the known universe was created when a small, water-filled star collided with a much larger star, causing an explosion, the frozen fragments of which created multiple solar systems. This explosion and the ensuing fragments, Hörbiger and Fauth argued, explained gravity, the rotation of the planets, and various other interstellar phenomena. In emphasizing the impact of prehistoric moons made of ice, the fragments of which created the various layers of earth's crust, WEL supposedly revealed Earth's own geological history as well.[84] Beyond its natural scientific implications, Hörbiger and his supporters believed that WEL provided "the foundation of a new 'cosmic cultural history'" and an "astronomy of the invisible" founded upon "creative intuition."[85] Needless to say, few mainstream physicists, astronomers, or geologists gave this theory credence, with the Austrian astronomer Edmund Weiss famously pointing out that, by employing Hörbiger's "intuitive" methods, one could just as easily claim the cosmos is made out of olive oil as ice.[86] Hörbiger, in turn, merely ignored mainstream science, seeking to popularize WEL among a Weimar public hungry for spiritual alternatives through public lectures, cosmic ice movies, and radio programs.[87]

Although there was nothing explicitly racist about Hörbiger's theories, WEL attracted a number of Germans who, weaned on ariosophy and other esoteric doctrines, sought an "Aryan" alternative to so-called Jewish physics, from relativity to quantum mechanics. WEL supporters also were keen to point out the parallels between Hörbiger and Hitler, from their Austrian origins to their successes as so-called amateurs reshaping "professional" fields (physics and politics, respectively).[88] Hitler, who was generally less enthusiastic about esoteric beliefs than were some Nazi colleagues, nonetheless found world ice theory attractive, from its utility in countering "Jewish physics" to his genuine belief in its predictive qualities when it came to geological and meteorological phenomena.[89] In this respect, WEL becomes the perfect exemplar of the mix of science and

the supernatural that defined the Nazi approach toward knowledge and society, producing "sensations of authenticity that made the distinction between 'serious' scientific work, committed to objectivity and rationality, and mere dramatic banter about it almost impossible, at least for the broader public."[90]

If Hitler and other leading Nazis embraced WEL in theory for both practical and ideological reasons, it fell to Himmler's Institute for Ancestral Research (*Ahnenerbe*) to lend the ideas legitimacy in the face of withering criticism from mainstream scientific circles. Already during the first three years of the Third Reich, a number of pro-Nazi intellectuals and functionaries associated with Himmler's *Ahnenerbe* began to push to make WEL an officially recognized science. Among WEL's leading defenders in Himmler's circle were *SS-Obersturmführer* Hans Robert Scultetus, head of the *Ahnenerbe*'s Institute for Meterology, which maintained close ties to the Austrian-based Hörbiger Institute. Himmler's WEL brain trust also included Edmund Kiss, the SS novelist, explorer, and amateur scientist whose science fiction combined the ariosophic premise of a lost Nordic Atlantis or Thule (whose remnants were now preserved in Tibet) with Hörbiger's world ice theory.[91]

From early in Third Reich, Kiss, Scultetus, and other supporters of WEL recognized that it would require the public imprimatur of Himmler and the NSDAP to give their unorthodox ideas official status.[92] In 1936 Scultetus therefore proposed the Pyrmonter Protocol, a document designating Hörbiger's theories as "the intellectual gift of a genius" and sponsoring "all people working on WEL under the leadership of a spiritual leader, whose sole responsibility was to the Reichstführers-SS." Needless to say, Scultetus already had the perfect "spiritual leader" in mind: himself.[93] The protocol indicated further that scientists deviating from "Meister Hoerbiger's" theories in their "fundamental form" would cease to receive funding and could be disciplined in some way.[94] So again we find the regime persecuting esoteric practitioners not because of their supernatural premises but because it wanted to control who could practice such doctrines and what they could preach.

One of the first WEL proponents to run afoul of the Pyrmonter Protocol was Georg Hinzpeter, president of the "Society for the Sponsorship of World Ice Theory [*Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Welteislehre* or GFW]."[95] Hinzpeter's research on various astronomical and meterological questions—in particular his accurate critique of Hörbiger's icy basis of the Milky Way—failed to comport with Hörbiger's original findings and hence were causing friction between Hörbiger's son, who directed the Austrian Hörbiger Institute, and the GFW, under Hinzpeter's presidency.[96] In December 1936 Scultetus began lobbying behind the scenes to get rid of Hinzpeter as president of the GFW and put the devout Nazi, racist esotericist, and WEL supporter, Rudolf von

Elmayer-Vestenbrugg, in charge (of the GFW-sponsored *Zeitschrift der Welteislehre* [Journal of World Ice Theory]).[97] Scultetus was particularly impressed by the draft of a recent article Elmayer had written, "Hanns Hoerbiger, the Copernicus of the 20th Century," which had passed peer review at Himmler's *Ahnenerbe* with flying colors.[98]

Unfortunately, Elmayer proved not to be the best replacement. After Elmayer's article appeared in the nonspecialist *Illustrierter Beobachter* (Illustrated Observer) in January 1937, the publisher received a flurry angry of letters from the mainstream scientific community. The Rostock physicist P. Kunze observed that Elmayer approached WEL with a "nearly religious fervor," producing an article that "does no service either to the man on the street nor the state."[99] The *Wehrmacht* engineer Peter Lautner added that the article "damages of the reputation of German science" in its "wholly unjustified disdain" for a generation's work by "mathematicians, physicists, and engineers." Elmayer should have known "very well that German scientists have no time for fruitless debates with religious theories." How could "fairy tales" and "religious teachings" like WEL be lent "the name of science" at a moment when young men are coming to the *Wehrmacht* with minimal "basic knowledge of mathematics and physics"? Lautner sent his letter not only to the editorial staff but also "to the Ministry for Science, Art and Public Education, so that they might more effectively put the tellers of fairy tales in their place."[100]

A letter from the head of the German astronomical observatory, Cuno Hoffmeister, was especially critical of the "plethora of factual inaccuracies and arbitrary claims," asking rhetorically, "What impression must a reader get if he discovers that a theory exists that in its achievements surpasses everything we know until this point, that is destined to put our entire world view and mastery of nature on new foundations, but that science—and especially German science—has refused to recognize, partly out of incompetence and partly out of ill-will?" Either the reader would recognize that something was not right in this argument, Hoffmeister suggested, or "that the positions in Germany trusted with the propagation of science are filled partly with idiots, partly with narrow-minded bureaucrats, who stand in the way of progress, either because they're incompetent or because they reject anything that does not originate from themselves and comport with their preordained views. . . . If the reader draws the second conclusion," Hoffmeister concluded, "then he must also take a critical view toward those individuals who appointed the representatives of science to their offices, therefore the ministries and the government . . . such publications are capable of damaging the reputation of state institutions and consequently the state itself."[101] Faced with this unanimous criticism from mainstream scientific circles, Scultetus and the *Ahnenerbe* nonetheless came to Elmayer's defense, offering to bring in Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry if necessary.[102]

Only a few weeks after the Elmayer debacle, Scultetus dutifully notified Hinzpeter that his work was no longer going to be supported by the regime because it deviated from Hörbinger's original theory and hence the Pyrmonter Protocol.[103] Hinzpeter replied sensibly, "If I may make a comparison: no one would call into question the extraordinary service of Daimler or Benz, but one would nevertheless not drive in a car of their original construction, preferring a model with a more modern style. For the same reason no one would think of diminishing the great service of Hanns Hörbiger, but would focus on maintaining the living development of WEL."[104] Sievers and Himmler nonetheless found Hinzpeter's justification unconvincing, urging him to leave larger interpretative matters to Scultetus.[105] Finally, in May 1937 Hörbiger's son joined the controversy, writing an open letter to the GFW, which admonished Hinzpeter not to represent the WEL in his work with the *Ahnenerbe*, since he hasn't been following the leadership principle (*Führergrundsatz*) of his father.[106] Hinzpeter and a colleague wrote a response, which they planned to submit to the *Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Prussian Academy of Sciences). But Himmler and Scultetus, at Hörbiger's urging, had the document suppressed.[107]

Just when Hörbiger, Scultetus, and company were emerging from the Hinzpeter affair, a new controversy arose, stemming from a January 1938 article, "Science and World Ice Theory," by the geologist Karl Hummel, published in the mainstream *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Geologischen Gesellschaft* (Journal of the German Geological Society). Hummel began cautiously, "If unscientific thoughts on scientific issues can gain a foothold in many parts of the population, it is on the one hand a sign of the positive fact that a widespread interest in these scientific matters is present in the people; but it represents on the other hand a reproach to the relevant representatives of science, who have failed to meet the scientific needs of the people due to their better judgment."[108] While one could blame this lack of judgement on the socialistic Weimar Republic, Hummel conceded, the fact remains that "the followers and representatives of World Ice Theory were not proletarians, but largely representative of thoroughly bourgeois social groups (especially from technical fields)," which "shows just how far the mental confusion and alienation between the different strata then thrived."[109] That Nazi voters derived primarily from these "thoroughly bourgeois groups" could not have been lost on the reader.

Needless to say, Fauth was furious and the Nazi authorities troubled by Hummel's article, which suggested a link between WEL, irrational thinking, and, implicitly at least, the popularity of National Socialism. Recognizing the larger implications, Scultetus immediately forwarded the article and his initial response to Hummel to the head of the *Ahnenerbe*, Wüst. Fauth's letter criticized many aspects of Hummel's article, in

particular his typically "scientific" language, such as "we *know*, we have *concluded*, we have *calculated*, we have *proven*," words that WEL proponents rarely used because they were far too positivistic.[110] Far from conceding anything to the amateur astronomer whom Hitler had recently granted an honorary doctorate, Hummel asserted that having a scientific debate with Fauth was impossible "because one can refute a rational but never a faith-based [*glaubensmaessige*] conviction through objective counterarguments." Hummel, it should be noted, did not oppose Fauth's openness to alternative points of view. "You claim for yourself the right to reject every . . . claim to authority," Hummel observed, and "in this principle you are united with me and most scientists worth taking seriously." After examining recent debates in geological circles, however,

> you have merely taken from the discussion that science is in disagreement over some questions; indeed, we know that there are still many unsolved questions; were this not the case then we wouldn't need to carry on further research . . . [T]here is long way from recognizing the disagreement over this or that question to the conclusion you draw that now any hypothesis you like, no matter how questionable, any air-headed collection of thoughts that completely contradicts empirical observations, may claim equal academic value.[111]

It is hard to say what is more remarkable about this article and the ensuing exchange: the fact that Hummel so eloquently exposed the Third Reich's faith-based approach to science or the fact that he was able to do so without paying any professional price.

Fauth would have the last laugh, however. While mainstream geologists agreed with Hummel, the *Ahnenerbe* chose to double down in their support of WEL.[112] In summer 1939, on the three-year anniversary of the Pyrmonter Protocol, the *Ahnenerbe*'s Geophysical Research Institute sponsored a conference focused on using WEL to make long-term meteorological predictions in assisting the *Luftwaffe*, which invited only those WEL proponents most favorable to the SS point of view.[113] But when it came to the planned discussion of how to proceed in regard to the Pyrmonter Protocol, some debate ensued. Fauth, true to his open-minded if largely faith-based approach to science, felt that WEL supporters should be allowed to diverge from the protocol so long as they worked in "pure scientific" fashion. Scultetus nonetheless insisted that it was time to reinforce the Pyrmonter Protocol by issuing a more binding agreement endorsed by Himmler. Scultetus followed up with a letter arguing this same point to Sievers, Wüst, and Himmler, noting that Hinzpeter's GFW would now "disappear, so that the complete efforts of the Ahnenerbe could no longer be called into question." As soon as the Austrian Cosmotechnical Society and all other related organizations

were "dissolved," Scultetus concluded, the *Reichsführer* SS would assume "protective control [*Schirmherrschaft*] over World Ice Theory."[114]

The official letter, endorsed by Himmler, instructed all recipients that the "promotion [of WEL] through lay publications be kept at a minimum and that no signees of the Pyrmonter Protocol may compose new works of that kind" in order to guarantee that "the reputation of WEL was no longer endangered by dilettantish treatment by other circles." This codicil was clearly directed at individuals like Elmayer, whose terrible reputation in mainstream scientific circles was deemed a liability.[115] Hence, what might appear at first glance as a lack of the trust in some of the proponents of WEL, whether Hinzpeter or Elmayer, was in fact another case of the Third Reich wanting to coordinate and control the supernatural sciences, absorbing the entire WEL research apparatus into the *Ahenenerbe*. Having become almost completely discredited within the mainstream scientific community, WEL's only chance of legitimacy was based on the monopoly support of a Nazi regime intent on exploring, like Krafft, Steiner, and Hörbiger before them, a range of border sciences based on supernatural premises.

Conclusion

In her groundbreaking work on German esotericsm, Corinna Treitel represents the views of much recent scholarship when she concludes,"Occultism ceased its highly public presence as part of Germany's refomist milieu of cultural experimentation only after 1937, when the Nazi regime suppressed occultism as one of its many ideological enemies."[116] The evidence in this chapter, while not entirely incompatible with this statement, suggests a more complex picture. First and most importantly, the Nazi regime was much more selective in its suppression of occult and other border sciences than Treitel and other revisionist accounts suggest. As Eberhard Bauer observes, the Nazi approach to the border sciences was one of "double entry book-keeping," alternating persecution of leading occultists with official sponsorship of border-scientific research, sometimes involving the same individuals who had been earlier or would be later surveilled or arrested.[117]

Second, the "highly public presence" of occult and border sciences did not necessarily diminish in the Third Reich. Certainly the process of coordination and control that the Third Reich exercised in virtually every aspect of cultural and intellectual life often meant reducing the free pursuit of a particular esoteric doctrine or pushing "cultural experimentation" behind closed doors—as in the case of astrology. But in terms of biodynamic agriculture and world ice theory, the regime's commitment was both public and powerful, suggesting that the Nazis were hardly ideologically opposed to the supernatural sciences themselves. When the

regime did "coordinate" such ideas, it had less to do with an epistemological rejection of occultism than a desire to control public opinion, as in the case of popular astrology, eliminate alternative loyalites, as in the case of anthroposophy, or assert a particular version of the regime's border-scientific view, as in the case of world ice theory.[118]

Third, and related, the Third Reich was drawn to the border sciences, as we have seen, precisely because of their interest in the "reformist milieu of cultural experimentation." Whereas the balance between free experimentation on the one hand and coordination and appropriation on the other was always precarious, we have seen multiple examples of the regime's willingness to experiment with alternatives to mainstream science.[119] Whether it was Goebbels employing Krafft and Kritzinger; Schellenberg and Kaltenbrunner funding Wulff and Walther; Roeder and the *Reichsmarine*'s use of pendulum dowsers; Hess, Darré, and Ohlendorff employing BDW and defending other aspects of Anthroposophy, or Himmler and Hitler protecting and propagating world ice theory, a remarkable number of high-ranking Nazis were passionately in favor of the new possibilities offered by the border sciences and took clear political risks in defending them vis-à-vis traditional academic disciplines. In short, the regime's ideological and epistemological investment in supernatural science extended well beyond the "pragmatic" efforts outlined in chapter 7.

Finally, and despite the Hess affair, we cannot even say with certainty that the regime's hostility to such ideas or likelihood to persecute their practitioners increased after 1937. To be sure, the regime increasingly "coordinated" all three supernatural sciences we have surveyed, eliminating their free pursuit in civil society, arresting or co-opting their practitioners, and subordinating those doctrines to the interests of the state. But there is no clear pattern between the radicalization of Nazi domestic and foreign policy, culminating in war and genocide, and the eradication of the supernatural sciences. To the contrary, if anything, the war led to a greater willingness to experiment with border-scientific practices, even after the so-called Special Action Hess of 1941.[120]

In the end, far from eliminating the supernatural sciences after 1933, the Third Reich was more concerned with exploiting these ideas and practices for their own purposes. Typical of a one-party state with totalitarian pretensions, the Nazis sought to marginalize alternative interpretations and ideologically compromised proponents of the supernatural sciences in order to preserve the legitimacy of the ideas and practices on which these doctrines were based. That is, like most border scientists, Nazi leaders repeatedly invoked the putatively "scientific" nature of the esoteric practices that they found useful, rejecting rival views as "occult" or unscientific.[121] But the fact remains that the Nazis drew on a wide range of supernatural sciences in decision making and policy, ideas that, while not

invariably fascist in origin, would help facilitate projects both fantastical and monstrous during the Third Reich.

Notes

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[2] Alfred Rosenberg, as quoted in BAB: NS 8/185, 49–50.

[3] Uwe Schellinger, "Die 'Sonderaktion Heß' im Juni 1941: Beschlagnahmung und Verwertung von Buchbeständen der 'Geheimlehren' und 'Geheimwissenschaften,'" in ed. Regine Dehnel, *NS-Raubgut in Museen, Bibliotheken und Archiven* (Frankfurt am Main: Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, 2012), 317–41.

[4] Karl Krafft to Hans Bender, February 20, 1932, IGPP 10/5 AII9 file 1.

[5] Karl Krafft to Hans Bender, March 12, 1931, IGPP 10/5 AII9 file 2; also see Hans Bender to Karl Krafft, November 10, 1936, IGPP 10 /5 AII9 File 2.

[6] Hans Bender to Karl Krafft, October 11, 1936, IGPP 10/5 AII9 file 2.

[7] Frank-Rutger Hausmann, *Hans Bender (1907–1991) und das "Institut für Psychologie und Klinische Psychologie" an der Reichsuniversität Straßburg 1941–1944*, Grenzüberschreitungen 4 (Würzburg: Ergon 2006).

[8] Ellic Howe, *Urania's Children: The Strange World of the Astrologers* (London: Kimber, 1967), 171–83.

[9] Howe, *Urania's Children*, 114–19.

[10] Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 229–30; August 3, 1938, sgd. Dr. Kittler, "Positives Gutachten Werner Kittler für PPK für Ebertin *Regulus Kalenders für 1939*," Berlin, August 3, 1938, BAB (*Reichskanzlei*) R 43-II/479a, http://www.polunbi.de/archiv/38-08-03-01.html.

[11] Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, 229–30; Gerda Walther, *Zum Anderen Ufer: Vom Atheismus zum Christentum* (Remagen: Reichl, Otto Der Leuchter Verlag, 1960), 568–82.

[12] Treitel, *A Science for the Soul.*

[13] IFZ, ED 386, G. Szczesny, "Die Presse des Okkultismus: Geschichte und Typologie der okkultistischen Zeitschriften" (PhD diss., University of Munich 1940), 55.

[14] Ellic Howe, *Nostradamus and the Nazis* (London: Arborfield, 1965), 124–26; Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 77–78; Dietrich Bronder, *Bevor Hitler Kam: Eine Historische Studie* (Hanover: Summer, 1975), 239–44.

[15] See Bernhard Hörmann to Eduard Neumann, June 12, 1940, Eduard Neumann to Bernhard Hörmann, September 12, 1940, in BAB: NS 18/497.Wolfgang Behringer and Jürgen Michael Schmidt, eds., *Himmlers Hexenkarthotek: Das Interesse des. Nationalsozialismus an der Hexenverfolgung* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1999); Hugh Trevor Roper, ed., *Hitler's Secret Conversations: 1941–1944* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1953); Felix Kersten, *The Kersten Memoirs* (London: Hutchinson, 1956). Wilhelm Wulff, *Zodiac and Swastika* (New York: Coward, 1973).

[16] H. H. Kritzinger, *Erdstrahlen, Reizstreifen, und Wünschelrute: Neue Versuche zur Abwendung krankmachender Einflüsse auf Grund eigener Forschungen* (Dresden: Talisman, 1933).

[17] Ludwig Straniak, *Das Siderische Pendel als Indikator der achten Naturkraft* (Rudolstadt: Gesundes Leben, 1937).

[18] Gerda Walther, *Zum Anderen Ufer: Vom Atheismus zum Christentum* (Remagen: Reichl, Otto Der Leuchter Verlag, 1960), 261–69, 409–92.

[19] Wulff, *Zodiac and Swastika*, 6–7.

[20] Wulff, *Zodiac and Swastika*, 15.

[21] See Krafft Horoscopes in Hans Bender IGPP 10/5 AII9 file 2.

[22] Howe, *Urania's Children*, 173–76, 178–81; Hans Frank, *Im Angesicht des Galgens* (Munich: Frank, 1955), 15.

[23] Howe, *Urania's Children*, 164–72; Wulff, *Zodiac and Swastika*, 15–16; Walther, *Zum Anderen Ufer*, 560–67.

[24] Howe, *Urania's Children*, 164–72; Wulff, *Zodiac and Swastika*, 15–16.

[25] Howe, *Urania's Children*, 2–3, 182–91; Wulff, *Zodiac and Swastika*, 94–98.

[26] See exchange between Alfred Rosenberg's expert in occult matters, Kurd Kisshauer, and Goebbels' Reichspropaganda Ministry, July 23, 1941, August 25, 1941, in BAB: NS 15/399; Wulff, *Zodiac and Swastika*, 92–95.

[27] Karl Krafft to Hans Bender, March 27, 1940, IGPP 10/5AII9 file 2 (Karl Krafft).

[28] Hans Bender to Herr Schenz, February 16, 1940, IGPP 10/5 AII9 file 1 (Karl Krafft—Walther).

[29] Wilhelm Wulff, *Zodiac and Swastika*, pp. 92–94.

[30] Ellic Howe, *Nostradamus and the Nazis*, 130–31; Walther, *Zum Anderen Ufer*, 599–601; Schellinger et. al., "Zwischen Szientismus und Okkultismus."

[31] Schellinger, "Die 'Sonderaktion Heß.'"

[32] Howe, *Urania's Children*, 192–203.

[33] Gerda Walther, *Zum Anderen Ufer*, 583–99.

[34] See letters, including one from personal staff of *Reichsführer* SS to Hans Bender, July 28, 1943, in NL Hans Bender, IGPP 10/5 AIII2. Also see Hausmann, *Hans Bender*.

[35] Wulff, *Zodiac and Swastika*, 75–77; Schellinger, Anton, and Schetsche, "Zwischen Szientismus und Okkultismus."

[36] Howe, *Nostradamus and the Nazis*, 130–31; Schellinger, Anton, and Schetsche, "Zwischen Szientismus und Okkultismus"; Wulff, *Zodiac and Swastika*, 74–76.

[37] Wulff, *Zodiac and Swastika*, 74–76; Howe, *Urania's Children*, 235–43; Howe, *Nostradamus and the Nazis*, 131; Walther, *Zum Anderen Ufer*, 599–602.

[38] Wulff, introduction to *Zodiac and Swastika*, 18.

[39] Wulff, *Zodiac and Swastika*, 81–88, 115–19.

[40] Wulff, *Zodiac and Swastika*, 77–80, 86–87; also see files on Operation Eiche in BAF: N 756/329b, *Sonderlehrgang z.b.V. Oranienburg, SS-Sonderverband z.b.V. Friedenthal, SS-Jäger-Bataillon 502 Unternehmen "Eiche" (Mussolini-Befreiung am 12.9.1943)*; Walter Schellenberg, *Memoiren* (Cologne: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Politik, 301–2; Howe, *Urania's Children*, 235–43.

[41] Schellenberg, *Memoiren*, 301.

[42] Longerich, *Himmler*, 281.

[43] Wulff, *Zodiac and Swastika*, 29–33.

[44] See exchange between Kisshauer and Reich Propaganda Ministry, July 23, 1941, August 25, 1941, in BAB: NS 15/399.

[45] Helmut Zander, "Esoterische Wissenschaft um 1900: 'Pseudowissenschaft' als Produkt ehemals 'hochkultureller' Praxis," in *Pseudowissenschaft: Konzeptionen von Nichtwissenschaftlichkeit in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, ed. Dirk Rupnow, Veronika Lipphardt, Jens Thietl, and Christina Wessely (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 77–81.

[46] Helmut Zander, "Esoterische Wissenschaft um 1900," 88–89, 95–96.

[47] Uwe Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus (1933–1945)* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1999) 7–8, 38–46.

[48] Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 47–50, 212–21.

[49] Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 32–38; Anna Bramwell, *Blood and Soil: Walther Darré and Hitler's Green Party* (Windsor: Kensal Press, 1985), 176; Peter Staudenmaier, "Organic Farming in Nazi Germany: The Politics of Biodynamic Agriculture, 1933–1945," *Environmental History* 18 (2013): 14.

[50] See Gutachten by Alfred Bäumler über Rudolf Steiner und Waldorfschulen, in IfZG MA 610/1 (Rosenberg), 57707–23.

[51] Staudenmaier, "Organic Farming," 3.

[52] IfZG ED 498/23 NL Otto Ohlendorff, (1945), 2–3; Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 85–91; Staudenmaier, "Organic Farming," 10–11.

[53] Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 93.

[54] IfZG ED 498/23 NL Otto Ohlendorff, (1945), 2–6; Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 44–45, 83–84.

[55] Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 83–84; Staudenmaier, "Organic Farming," 5.

[56] Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 93–94; Staudenmaier, "Organic Farming," 4–8.

[57] Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 89–91; Staudenmaier, "Organic Farming," 4–8.

[58] IfZG ED 498/23 NL Otto Ohlendorff (1945), 2–3.

[59] Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 248–49, 259–61.

[60] Staudenmaier, "Organic Farming," 4; Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 49–51, 283.

[61] Heather Pringle, *Master Plan*, 40–41.

[62] Paula Diehl, *Macht, Mythos, Utopie: die Körperbilder der SS-Männer* (Berlin: Akademie, 2005), 59.

[63] See Walther Darré's correspondence and articles in NL Walther Darré, BAK: N 1094/16 (Biodynamic Agriculture, 1951).

[64] Walther Darré to Herr Lübbemeier, March 26, 1953, BAK: N 1094/11.

[65] Walther Darré to Herbert Backe, June 1, 1941, in BAK: N 1094II/1.

[66] Walther Darré to Heinrich Himmler, June 5, 1939, in NL Walther Darré, BAK: N 1094II/58; Walther Darré, "Zur Geschichte des SS-Rasse-Und-Siedlungshauptames" in NL Walther Darré, BAK: N 1094I/3, 2–5.

[67] Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 279–82.

[68] IfZG ED 498/23 NL Otto Ohlendorff (1945), 1–2, 5–6.

[69] IfZG ED 498/23 NL Otto Ohlendorff (1945), 7; Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 303–5; Staudenmaier, "Organic Farming," 9–10; Also see correspondence in NL Walther Darré, BAK: N 1094/14.

[70] IfZG ED 498/23 NL Otto Ohlendorff, (1945), 4–7.

[71] Reinhard Heydrich to Walther Darré, October, 18, 1941, in BAK: N 1094II/1.

[72] Reinhard Heydrich to Walther Darré, October, 18, 1941, in NL Walther Darré BAK: N 1094II/1.

[73] Walther Darré to Rudi Peuckert, June 27, 1941, in NL Walther Darré BAK: N 1094II/1.

[74] Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 284.

[75] Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 279–82.

[76] Staudenmaier, "Organic Farming," 4–6.

[77] Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 283.

[78] Staudenmaier, "Organic Farming," 14.

[79] Staudenmaier, "Organic Farming," 11; Hans Merkel to Eugen Walter Buettner, 1951, in NL Walther Darré, BAK: N 1094/14.

[80] Walther Darré to Johann Blankemeyer, May 21, 1941, in NL Walther Darré, BAK: N 1094II/1; Gayl to Darré, in BAK: N1094II/1; Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 280–86.

[81] Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 26–27, 59, 66, 72.

[82] Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 143–44.

[83] Staudenmaier, "Organic Farming," 16–17.

[84] Christina Wessely, "Welteis: Die 'Astronomie des Unsichtbaren' um 1900," in Rupnow et al., *Pseudowissenschaft*, 163–78.

[85] Wessely, "Welteis," 171; Robert Bowen, *Universal Ice: Science and Ideology in the Nazi State* (London: Belhaven, 1993), 4–6.

[86] Wessely, "Welteis," 181–88.

[87] Christina Wessely, "Cosmic Ice Theory—Science, Fiction and the Public, 1894–1945," Max Planck Institute for History of Science (2011), accessed June 8, 2015, http://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/en/research/projects/DeptIII-ChristinaWessely-Welteislehre.

[88] Bowen, *Universal Ice*, 7; Wessely, "Cosmic Ice Theory."

[89] Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 133.

[90] Wessely, "Cosmic Ice Theory."

[91] See Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun*, 132–33; Bowen, *Universal Ice*, 83–89.

[92] Hans Robert Scultetus to Bruno Galke, October 18, 1936; Hans Robert Scultetus to Bruno Galke, December 12, 1936; Hans Robert Scultetus to Herr Hauke, January 19, 1937, BAB: NS 21/770.

[93] Michael Kater, *Das "Ahnenerbe" der SS 1935–1945: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturpolitik des Dritten Reiches* (Stuttgart: Deutscher Verlags-Anstalt, 1974), 52.

[94] Longerich, *Himmler*, 279–80; Wessely, "Welteis," 190.

[95] Philip Fauth to Karl Hummel, February 13, 1938, BAB: NS 21/770.

[96] See Hanns Hörbiger to Hans Robert Scultetus, April 15, 1937; Hanns Hörbiger to Hans Robert Scultetus, April 13, 1937; Wolfram Sievers to Georg Hinzpeter, April 19, 1937, in BAB: NS 21/770.

[97] E. V. von Rudolf [pseud.], *Georg Ritter von Schönerer: Der Vater des politischen Antisemitismus. Von einem, der ihm selbst erlebt hat* (Munich: Franz Eher, 1942): Hans Robert Scultetus to Rudolf von Elmayer-Vestenbrugg, December 21, 1936, BAB: NS 21/699; Bowen, *Universal Ice*, 130–43.

[98] Hans Robert Scultetus to Rudolf von Elmayer-Vestenbrugg, December 6, 1936, Hans Robert Scultetus to Rudolf von Elmayer-Vestenbrugg, January 4, 1937, Hans Robert Scultetus to Philip Fauth, March 17, 1937, BAB: NS 21/699 (WEL); Bowen, *Universal Ice*, 147–49.

[99] P. Kunze to Dietrich Loder, February 6, 1937, BAB: NS 21/699 (WEL).

[100] Peter Lautner to Dietrich Loder, January 28, 1937, BAB: NS 21/699 (WEL).

[101] Cuno Hoffmeister to Franz Eher Verlag, January 29, 1937, BAB: N S21/699.

[102] Hans Robert Scultetus to Rudolf von Elmayer-Vestenbrugg, January 30, 1937, BAB: NS 21/699.

[103] Hans Robert Scultetus to Georg Hinzpeter, March 22, 1937, BAB: NS 21/770.

[104] Georg Hinzpeter to Wolfram Sievers, April 25, 1937. BAB: NS 21/770.

[105] Wolfram Sievers to Georg Hinzpeter, April 30, 1937; Heinrich Himmler to Georg Hinzpeter, April 30, 1937, BAB: NS 21/770.

[106] Hanns Hörbiger to Georg Hinzpeter, including "open letter," May 25, 1913; also see Hanns Hörbiger to Hans Robert Scultetus, May 25, 1937; Hans Robert Scultetus to Hanns Hörbiger, May 27, 1937; Hans Robert Scultetus to Wolfram Sievers, May 27, 1937; BAB: NS 21/770.

[107] Hanns Hörbiger to General Haenichen, January 13, 1938; Edmund Kiss to *Reichsgeschäftsführer des Ahnenerbe*, April 10,.1938, in BAB: NS 21/770.

[108] Karl Hummel, "Wissenschaft und Welteislehre," in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Geologischen Gesellschaft* 90 (January 1938): 46–50.

[109] Hummel, "Wissenschaft und Welteislehre," 46–50.

[110] Hans Robert Scultetus to Walther Wüst, February 9, 1938; Philip Fauth to Karl Hummel, February 7, 1938, BAB: NS 21/770.

[111] Karl Hummel to Philip Fauth, February 11, 1938, BAB: NS 21/770.

[112] Philip Fauth, Denkschrift, February 1938, BAB: NS 21/770.

[113] See Pyrmonter Protocol, July 19–21, 1939, BAB: NS 21/458.

[114] "Allgemein verstaendliche Darstellungen der Welteislehre," July 1939; Wolfram Sievers to *Forschungstätte für Geophysik*, August 21, 1939, BAB: NS21-458 (WEL).

[115] Wolfram Sievers to *Forschungstätte für Geophysik*, August 21, 1939, BAB: NS21-458 (WEL).

[116] Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, 248.

[117] Eberhard Bauer, *German Parapsychology during the Third Reich* (Freiburg: Institut fuer Grenzgebiete der Psychologie & Psychohygiene, 2007).

[118] Wullf, *Zodiac and Swastika*, 112–14; Werner, *Anthroposophen*, 259–62; Hans Merkel letter in NL Walther Darré, BAK: N 1094/14.

[119] Wessely, "Cosmic Ice Theory."

[120] Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer*; Schellenberg, *Memoiren*, 160.

[121] In particular see Schellinger, Anton, and Schetsche, "Zwischen Szientismus und Okkultismus."

7: Pragmatic Occultism in the Military History of the Third Reich

Uwe Schellinger, Andreas Anton, and Michael T. Schetsche

I.

Just a few months after the collapse of the Third Reich, the art historian Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub (1884–1963) highlighted the "blatant contradictions" which characterized the policy of the National Socialist regime toward "occult-scientific practices, doctrines and research projects." For Hartlaub, the analysis of the regime's "zigzag course" regarding these issues exemplified the general state of the NS system, which was defined by "ambiguities and duplicities."[1] Indeed, neither the relation of National Socialism to occult practices nor occultists' own attitudes toward the Third Reich can be described one-dimensionally.

Despite continued popular fascination in Nazism's esoteric or occult elements,[2] the amount of existing scholarship on the actual role of the so-called fringe sciences—that is, scientific occultism or parapsychology—remains modest.[3] On the one hand, little is known about the extent to which fringe scientists of the most various kinds were discriminated against or even persecuted by the National Socialist regime. On the other hand, the question whether and to what extent fringe scientists and parapsychologists became committed to the intentions of National Socialism (out of conviction, due to opportunism, or as a result of political pressure) has only been rudimentarily dealt with.[4]

For quite some time the debate has been dominated by two generally contradictory interpretations: mostly popular-scientific publications that highlight the "occult roots" of Nazi ideology[5] and revisionist accounts that emphasize the Third Reich's persecution of the occult, culminating in *Sonderaktion Hess* (Special action Hess) in June 1941, during which the NS apparatus took massive action against the representatives of so called "secret doctrines and secret sciences."[6] Neither interpretation provides a suitably differentiated understanding of the relation of National Socialism and the various occult or fringe-scientific doctrines or practices. With a few exceptions,[7] most publications lack descriptions of the actual situation of fringe scientists or occultists in the National Socialist period. And

most of the scholarly work that does exist fails to consider the changes in policy brought on by the Second World War, particularly the period beyond 1941.[8]

In continuing and complementing the analysis of preceding chapters in this volume, which focus on the interwar period and first six years of the Third Reich, the two case studies in this chapter will focus on the period after 1941. We will attempt to answer questions regarding which occult and fringe scientific fields the National Socialist regime preferred. What were the concrete results of their research? To which extent were actors from this field willing to be integrated into the intentions of the National Socialist regime? Which border-scientific ideas and practices could be made congruent with National Socialist ideology—and which ones not? In answering these questions, our case studies will indicate a relationship between Nazism and esotericism that is both more intimate than most revisionist accounts but also more pragmatic than the traditional interpretations discussed above.

II. The National Socialist State and Its Fight against Occultism: The "Action against Secret Doctrines and So-Called Secret Sciences" of June, 1941

As is generally known, on May 10, 1941, Rudolf Hess, the "Deputy of the Führer," flew to Scotland on his own initiative to start negotiations with British functionaries regarding a separate peace with the Western Allies.[9] Hess had a reputation for being very interested in esoteric topics, alternative medicine, natural medicine, and particularly astrology. For this reason, there had been growing tensions between him and other party leaders.[10] Hitler himself is said to have stated in a fury shortly after Hess's flight: "To me this step seems to have been co-authored by these astrology cronies whom Hess allowed to influence him. It is thus high time to radically clear up this astrology rubbish."[11] Urged on by Hess's rival Martin Bormann, Hitler and the Nazi regime consequently decided to blame the entire debacle on Hess's occult inclinations.[12]

On May 12, Hess was first publically discussed as showing "indications of madness" and "hallucinations."[13] On May 14, the *Völkischer Beobachter* (People's observer) confirmed that Hess had been suffering "from delusions" generated by his frequent recourse to "magnetic healers, astrologists," and other occult practitioners.[14] Their influence on Hess now served as the official reason for enacting radical measures against the occult "scene," so characterized. On May 15, Joseph Goebbels, in his function as the Reich's Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, passed a decree banning all kinds of occult, clairvoyant, telepathic or astrological presentations.[15] In his diary, Goebbels, who accused

Hess of "crude occultism," noted that this "swindle will now be finally extinct. The wonder men, Hess's favourites, will be busted."[16]

The planning and implementation of the appropriate actions were the task of the Gestapo and the *Sicherheitsdienst* (Security Service; SD). On June 4, 1941, the head of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (Reich Main Security Office; RSHA), *SS-Obergruppenführer* Reinhard Heydrich ordered the Gestapo to take extensive "action against secret doctrines and so-called fringe sciences," including astrologers, occultists, spiritualists, clairvoyants, faith healers, and followers of occult radiation theories, Christian Science, anthroposophy, theosophy and ariosophy.[17] "The German people," Heydrich wrote, "can no longer be left to occult doctrines pretending that all man's doings are dependent on secret magical powers."[18] Five days later, on June 9, Heydrich ordered a raid against those secret scientists and occultists who were known to the regime, in particular against a predetermined list of suspected occultists.[19] In the course of this action, a number of people were interrogated by the Gestapo and others were taken to concentration camps. "Thus this kind of swindle has finally come to an end," Goebbels wrote gleefully, and "not one of the seers knew that he would be arrested. Not a good image for the profession."[20]

Since the immediate postwar years this so-called Special Action Hess has been viewed as the final nail in the coffin of German occultism, a "brutal crackdown on the German occult movement."[21] The evidence would suggest, however, that every occultist was arrested or pushed underground during the last four years of the Third Reich. Already the RSHA order of June 4, 1941, allowed for exceptions: members of the *Wehrmacht*, party members with leading positions, or senior civil servants were to be left alone for the time being.[22] Still, few scholars have addressed what happened to the practice of scientific occultism, fringe sciences or parapsychology after June 1941.

III. Occultism and Fringe Sciences in the Service of the *Kriegsmarine* (1942)

One of the most neglected aspects of the Third Reich's interest in occultism after 1941 is the use of sidereal pendulums (radiesthesia)—namely, divining—by the *Marinewaffenamt* (Navy weapons board) and *Marinenachrichtendienst* (Navy intelligence service; MND) in locating Allied sea vessels. The sidereal pendulum employs a metal plummet or sinker whose movements reacted to certain radiations or vibrations that revealed the location of large objects many hundreds of miles away—what the navy called *Pendelortungsverfahren* (pendulum location method).[23] In autumn 1948, an extended report on the existence of a *Pendler-Abteilung*

(pendulum department) in the *Kriegsmarine* (Navy) was published in Germany, corroborated by Himmler's astrologer, Wilhelm T. H. Wulff, in a series of articles titled "Hitler, Himmler und die Sterne" (Hitler, Himmler and the stars).[24] After the war, the parapsychologist Gerda Walther also reported in considerable detail on her involvement in the project.[25] Almost all subsequent reports—starting with Howe's (1967) as far as to more recent publications—basically repeated what Wulff and Walther had initially reported.[26] Only in the 1980s did the journalists Sven Simon and Karl Heinz Reger publish two reports based on some new sources.[27]

In sum, these reports suggest that an experimental team was operating in the *Kriegsmarine*, whose task was to test unexplained paranormal phenomena, such as the effect of the sidereal pendulum, for their military usefulness.[28] For the time being, it is unknown who gave the order to establish this experiment team, who knew about it, and who among the *Kriegsmarine* leadership was the driving force behind the experiments. What can be shown, however, is that the experiments on pendulum location were coordinated by the MND of the *Seekriegsleitung* (Navy high command) and emerged, at least in part, from occult circles associated with the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für wissenschaftlichen Okkultismus* (German society of scientific occultism; D.G.W.O.) under the leadership of its president, Konrad Schuppe.[29]

Schuppe, who was elected vice president of the D.G.W.O. as early as in 1923 (and president in 1939) had tried to adjust to the Third Reich throughout the 1930s and promised in 1938 to base their Society "on the principle of authoritarianism."[30] Although the D.G.W.O. had managed to continue organizing lectures and seminars on esoteric, occultist, or parapsychological topics throughout the 1930s, the war provided both new challenges and new opportunities.[31] While the everyday lecturing activities of the association had mostly come to a halt, cooperations with military authorities provided opportunities to continue working. The III Army Corps asked the new chairman, Schuppe, to officially present the "activities of the Society." After the beginning of the war, there were contacts and cooperation agreements with Goebbels' Ministry of People's Enlightenment and Propaganda, which wanted to exploit the "Prophecies of Nostradamus" for propaganda purposes. Since late 1939, Propaganda Minister Goebbels was paying some attention to this topic.[32] And Schuppe was only too happy to volunteer his services, writing, "our Society is particularly pleased to be able to contribute to the fight which has been forced upon us."[33]

In late September 1939, the D.G.W.O. changed its name once again. Now operating under the name *Deutsche metaphysische Gesellschaft* (German Metaphysical Society; D.M.G.), Schuppe and company continued working for National Socialist authorities in the hopes of proving its loyalty to the National Socialist state.[34] The D.M.G. existed at least

until the spring of 1941, when the Hess affair led to the folding of many occult societies.[35] However, the gradual dissolution of the association's structures did not mean the end of all activities. Much suggests that in early 1942 the special expertise of the fringe scientists from the former D.G.W.O. were once again in demand, due to the interest of the navy. According to Schuppe, since 1939, the D.G.W.O./D.M.G. had dealt intensively with the topics of earth rays and dowsing rods, which soon attracted the interest of the German navy.[36]

Indeed, at the very moment that Schuppe and his colleagues in the D.G.W.O./D.M.G. saw their occult work at its lowest ebb, the *Marinenachrichtendienst* established several *Arbeitgemeinschaften* (teams) on the subject of *Schwingungsforschung für den U-Boot-Krieg* (Vibration Research for the U-Boat War), in which the navy's patent department was also involved.[37] And in September 1, 1942, the MND created a new department called *Forschung—Erfindungen—Patentwesen* (Research—Inventions—Patents; FEP), which was supposed to provide the Navy with detailed information about all issues of research, inventions, and patents, to keep contact to research institutions and to enhance the navy's research activities.[38] Its establishment must be considered a reaction to the ever more doggedly and costly U-boat war which forced the German navy to intensify its research and development efforts.

Despite the fact most of the original documents were destroyed during an air raid in November 1943,[39] we know a number of details about the personnel, organization, and recruiting strategy of the institute. The team was initiated and led by Navy Officer Hans A. Roeder (1888–1985), who was, from 1939, *Generalreferent* (expert general) of *Erfindungs- und Patentwesen* at the *Marinewaffenhauptamt* (an office of the Kriegsmarine, or German navy, concerned with new inventions and patents).[40] He had intensive personal interest in questions relating to fringe sciences and, according to Gerda Walther, called himself a "pendulum user."[41] But it was only in 1942, after the Hess affair, that Roeder was given the opportunity to implement his expertise on behalf of the regime, building an "institute" of his own in the navy, for the "research of certain psycho-physical problems." It had consisted of no less than seven subdepartments(!)[42] Wilhelm Wulff, who was himself a prominent member of the institute referred to its personnel as a "strange band" made up of "psychics . . ., pendulum users . . ., Tattwa researchers . . ., astrologists and astronomers, ballisticians and mathematicians."[43]

According to Gerda Walther, among this eclectic group, the professional astronomer Dr. Wilhelm Hartmann played an important role.[44] Hartmann, who had been ordered to Roeder's department from his office at the *Luftwaffe*, worked as a kind of office manager, likewise examining the qualifications of individual recruits. This key position may have been connected to his unusual double orientation as an astronomer and

astrologist.[45] But it was Schuppe who played the key role in recruiting individual astrologers and pendulum experts, many of whom were former members of the D.G.W.O. who had been put under surveillance as representatives of "secret doctrines and secret sciences."[46] Gerda Walther, for example, recalls meetings in early 1942 at the offices of the Roeder department with well-known veterans from the ranks of prewar German occultists, including former D.W.G.O. leaders such as Schuppe and the Berlin patent agent and chemist Dr. Fritz Quade (1884–1944). Although both individuals had been briefly imprisoned in the wake of the Hess affair, they now served as important contact partners between the D.W.G.O. and navy officials.[47]

Another well-known figure from the occultist scene and erstwhile member of the D.G.W.O., the astronomer Hans-Hermann Kritzinger (1887–1968), functioned as an important adviser for the group.[48] The author of numerous occult studies and editor of the magazine *Psychische Studien* (Psychic Studies), Kritzinger had played a central role in promoting the field of scientific occultism since the 1920s.[49] From the beginning of the Third Reich, Kritzinger combined his occult activities with more conventional work as a well-respected ballistics expert for the air force and the *Heereswaffenamt* (Army weapons agency).[50] In early 1940, he also began working directly for Goebbels in the National Socialist Ministry of Propaganda, because of his expertise with the prophecies of Nostradamus.[51] In 1939, Kritzinger's work attracted Goebbels's interest, who wanted to use certain statements by Nostradamus, in particular passages on the alleged decline of Britain, for propaganda purposes. But there is evidence that Goebbels consulted Kritzinger for advice as well.[52] Most importantly for the purposes of the navy, Kritzinger had dealt intensively with questions of radiesthesia and was considered an expert in this field.[53] Apart from the organiser of the association, Schuppe, Kritzinger must therefore be considered an important link between the representatives of scientific occultism, National Socialist authorities, and the military authorities.

In her unpublished manuscript "ESP in the German Navy," Gerda Walther writes that the director of the department, Roeder, had told his staff members that several German U-boats had been destroyed by British warships, which had been waiting at the U-boats' destinations. "This latter feature," Walther reports, "had greatly annoyed the German Navy-Authorities as it was absolutely impossible to know by normal means where the German submarines where going. Every possible precaution has been taken to secret it."[54] For this reason, Roeder suspected that the British military employed pendulum users to investigate the positions of German U-boats. Walther herself "thought this was impossible and thought it was much more likely that the British Navy had constructed some new apparatus for the detection of submarines so far unknown to the Germans."

But Captain Roeder persisted in his belief that the British had mastered the art of sidereal pendulum, which is apparently what inspired him to open his institute.[55] Roeder cited "reliable sources" according to Walther, "that near London the British had established an institute where, by help of using pendulums, the positions of German warships and most of all U-Boats were investigated." The only countermeasure, in Roeder's mind, was for the Germans to employ similar methods.[56]

Of course, the British had succeeded by the summer of 1941 in deciphering the German navy's Enigma codes as well as the radio communication of the German U-boat staff—an advantage which disappeared by February 1942, when the German navy updated its ciphering machines, making its radio communication bug-proof again.[57] The fact remains, however, that the period between summer 1941 and February 1942 witnessed a clear increase in German U-boat losses, peaking in November and December 1941. At that time, the German navy lost a total of fifteen U-boats in two months, which equalled more than half of the overall losses during the previous year.[58] This military-historical background renders the link between Roeder's statements regarding the need for a Pendulum Institute and the conspicuous British success in the war at sea highly plausible (even if there is no evidence whatsoever to confirm Roeder's alleged assumptions concerning a British pendulum institute).

Regardless of the mounting pressures to answer British successes in locating and sinking German U-boats, it's equally possible that a small group within the navy or even Roeder alone exploited the adverse military situation to legitimate their occult research interests. No doubt Roeder used his position as the director of a department within the *Marinehauptwaffenamt* (Navy weapons agency) to make an agreement with the *Marinenachrichtendienst* (Navy intelligence service) regarding these rather unusual-looking experiments. At the same time, Roeder's special department was likely viewed by the navy not as some occult dead end, but rather in the context of more rational logics of experimenting with any and all new technologies for military purposes. Rear Admiral Gerhard Wagner, chief of the Operational Department of the *Seekriegsleitung* between 1941 and 1944, admitted that "R[oeder], the pendulum user, was well-known to all of us. From the point of view of those days his work was not that unusual. After all, one was constantly thinking about new techniques, and if someone came and claimed to be able to achieve something by way of a certain method, it was a matter of course that he was given the opportunity."[59]

The actual trigger for establishing the pendulum department were likely test experiments that navy officers conducted with the Austrian engineer Ludwig Straniak (1879–1951) in Salzburg. Since the mid-1930s, this former master mason and engineer was considered one of the most influential and important pendulum researchers in German-speaking Europe.

With his 1936 book, *Die achte Groß-Kraft der Natur und ihre physikalischen Gesetze* (The Eighth Major Force of Nature and Its Physical Laws), Straniak established a preeminent position among the guild of pendulum researchers who were most active in the interwar period.[60] Interestingly, and despite the ostensible hostility of the regime to occultism, pendulum and radiesthesia researchers like Straniak showed hardly any fear of having contact with the Nazis after 1933. Already before the war, several prominent pendulum experts had indicated their willingness to offer their expertise to the National Socialist system and help develop "German radiesthesia."[61] Also the *Gesellschaft für Wissenschaftliche Pendelforschung* (Society for Scientific Pendulum Research), founded in 1936 and considerably influenced by Ludwig Straniak, explicitly expressed its loyalty to National Socialism and Adolf Hitler.[62] Nevertheless, in June 1941, the society was dissolved in the course of Special Action Hess, like so many other groups.[63]

After 1941, Straniak offered his services to the German navy and proved remarkably successful in locating German battleships with the help of the sidereal pendulum. As a result, he was ordered to Berlin, together with all his equipment, to carry out further experiments.[64] Soon Straniak had built up a heterogeneous group of other pendulum users and occultists. As no original rosters or organizational charts have been preserved—and Roeder's own account of his "institute" has been lost—we are forced to rely on the reports of eyewitnesses concerning the processes and methods employed by the institute.[65] According to Gerda Walther, the department was located at a villa in *Von-der-Heydt-Straße* near the *Tiergarten* in Berlin.[66] Wulff, on the other hand, reports that he had been invited to a building owned by the Navy High Command "am Tirpitzufer" (today: Reichpietschufer).[67] He recalls that some of the doors of the rooms he had been given were labeled with the sign SP (probably for "Sidereal Pendulum"), which, according to Walther—who is our only witness on this point—was also the official name of the team.[68] Wulff claims that the activities there had been "strictly confidential" and that the staff members had been under the impression of being constantly supervised.[69] However, it was impossible to keep Roeder's experiments secret, which became widely known far beyond Berlin.[70]

Most department members were assigned the primary task of locating enemy ships and convoys by way of using the pendulum or other extraordinary means. Day after day, according to Wulff, the pendulum users would sit "with their arms stretched out across the nautical charts" waiting to discern the slightest movements.[71] Walther likewise reports that the majority of the pendulum users were women. She herself had been given this task for a number of days before completing a kind of probationary period. Indeed, indicating the "scientific" nature of the proceedings, those being recruited were at first tested for their skills, their

results were compared, and only then were they gradually eased into the military context of their employment.[72] Furthermore, there were individual "clairvoyants" who, as Wulff reports, "were constantly in a trance" in order to make certain predictions.[73] Thus it seems as if there were different occult groups and individuals with different tasks and using different techniques. This heterogeneous staff and loose structure sometimes yielded different opinions regarding the goals and methods of work. Proven technicians, such as Roeder and Straniak, hoped for insights into physical effects of the pendulum, whereas fringe scientists, such as Gerda Walther, explicitly considered paranormal phenomena as explanations for possible results. Roeder, on the other hand, revealed himself as a materialist without any interest in psychological or even parapsychological aspects. As Walther explained later, she was eventually prevented from making further contributions because of Roeder's disregard for her parapsychological approaches.[74]

All existing reports underscore the reality that, despite its massive efforts, the department produced no tangible military results or intelligence successes. As Admiral Schniewind, commander of the fleet since June 1941, later recalled, "I was never told . . . that the pendulum experiments by the Roeder Institute were in any way used for practical Navy warfare."[75] According to Walther, that was why the department was dissolved again already in autumn 1942.[76] Indeed, on November 2, 1942, at a briefing with the chief of the Navy High Command, Grand Admiral Raeder, the head of the Navy Intelligence Service, Rear Admiral Maertens, indicated that the "Pendulum location method has proven ineffective in the course of long series of experiments. Experiments are stopped."[77] The experiments likely ended shortly thereafter. The circumstances under which the official work of the SP department was stopped are consequently a clear indication of the pragmatic, military-functional context within which the attempts at pendulum location occurred. In the context of a highly dynamic military situation, what promised to have at least theoretical relevance was given a chance, no matter whether the ideas and concepts behind it looked bizarre from a layperson's perspective.

At first glance the SP department or Hans A. Roeder's "institute" of the German navy, which probably existed for no more than a few months in 1942, appears to be a footnote in German military history. Because of the complete failure of its work, one can certainly not make the case that Roeder's institute had any impact on the military outcome of the war. However, the work of the SP department is hardly tangential in the context of the larger debate regarding the occult character of the Third Reich—namely, whether the Nazi leadership accepted or rejected fringe scientific research. In view of the orders connected to Special Action Hess of June, 1941, we may assume that the work of the SP department was not about "secret doctrines," "secret societies," or occultism in the

esoteric or ideological sense. Much more probable is that the main actors simply seized the opportunity (that is, the first setbacks of the U-boots in the Battle of the Atlantic) to experiment with a new, until then little researched intelligence technology, that is, the sidereal pendulum. Actors like Roeder were not essentially driven by an esoteric belief in miracles but rather by natural-scientific-technological curiosity. The sidereal pendulum was deemed a possible practical-technological tool of warfare, not an outgrowth of occult mysticism or irrationalism.

To be sure, the inclusion of a variety of fringe scientists, esoteric practicioners, and self-declared clairvoyants in these experiments indicates the regime's broad approach to this unknown field of research, which, in respect to its basic idea and implementation, was less unusual than it might look today. Concerning an "answer to the problem of the dowsing rod" and the research field of radiesthesia, for example, the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA) of the SS as well as National Socialist leadership circles made increasing efforts over the course of 1942 to get a better handle on the (technological) foundations and possibilities.[78] The pendulum location experiments in Berlin in 1942 may have employed the expertise and experiences of a variety of well-known occultists. But, as Gerda Walther suggests, these experiments were generally unconcerned with proving any esoteric tradition of thought. Rather, they were basically science-oriented. In the end, this first case study suggests the ambivalent position of National Socialist elites toward occult phenomena.[79] Those responsible for the Pendulum Institute in the German navy did not see any problem with using, quite pragmatically, the help of people who had just a few months previously, in the course of Special Action Hess, been persecuted or arrested by the Gestapo and the SD. All that mattered was the practical potential for success in the military field.

IV. The National Socialist Regime and Its Search for Il Duce (1943)

Our second case presents another situation in which the National Socialist authorities proved willing to enlist paranormal forces for pragmatic military and intelligence goals. This entails the search for the kidnapped Italian dictator Benito Mussolini and his spectacular liberation by German forces in September, 1943, which has been widely documented in the scholarly literature.[80] On July 25, by order of the Italian king, Il Duce had been arrested and then hidden at changing locations. Immediately after the kidnapping, the Germans stepped in to locate their ally Mussolini. Although there were at least three different efforts to find Mussolini by paranormal methods, the documentation is limited. Similar to the case of the navy's Pendulum Institute, most information is based on later

recollections of the parties involved, whose stories were retold in subsequent publications. In 1950, for example, the former *SS-Obersturmbannführer* Otto Skorzeny, who led the special forces mission that liberated Mussolini, asserted that Himmler had resorted to hiring "seers and astrologists to glean Mussolini's whereabouts."[81] After Skorzeny's revelations, the occult nature of the operation to free Mussolini (Operation *Eiche*) was a frequent topic in the above-mentioned journalistic and popular-scientific publications on the topic of "occultism in the Third Reich."[82] But it took another couple decades before Skorzeny's brief reference to seers and astrologers was picked up in the scholarly literature by the American author Greg Anussek and the Italian historian Marco Patricelli.[83]

As it turns out, Skorzeny was correct. On July 28, 1943, Wilhelm Th. H. Wulff, who we know was working for Roeder in the Pendulum Institute in 1942, was visited in Hamburg by Gestapo officials and taken to Berlin—allegedly by order of Heinrich Himmler himself—where he was introduced to the head of the criminal investigation department, *SS-Gruppenführer* Arthur Nebe. In late 1942, Wulff had met Himmler's personal physician, Felix Kersten, who had apparently spoken highly of Wulff and his abilities in the presence of the *Reichsführer-SS*. Now, barely six months later, Himmler demanded his service. According to Wulff, the chief Nebe immediately explained the purpose of his visit: "Mr. Wulff, the Reichsführer ordered me to give you some tasks. What I'm going to say now must be kept secret under all circumstances. Since July 25th Mussolini has disappeared. He had a conversation with the King, and when he left him he was kidnapped in an ambulance car. Badoglio has defected to the enemy, and Italy is out for a separate peace agreement. The Reichsführer orders you to discover Mussolini's whereabouts by astrological means."[84]

The National Socialists placed considerable hopes in Wulff's ability to do so and Himmler's soon-to-be personal astrologer did not disappoint. He assured Nebe that he could help and was allowed to return to Hamburg for preliminary investigations, although under constant supervision by the Gestapo.[85] By early September 1943, Wulff had his calculations ready. Wulff would later try to play down his involvement by saying that he had tried to prolong the transfer of his results as long as possible and that he had attempted to betray his clients Himmler and Hitler. But all evidence suggests that he worked on the matter assiduously and derived some benefits as a result. He was given comfortable accommodations in Berlin, at a guest house owned by the criminal investigation department.[86] Moreover, Artur Nebe's former personal assistant would report two decades later on the central role Wulff played in the search for Mussolini,[87] and finally Wulff himself would note the benefits of working for the SS: "For me Nebe's . . . order, the search for Mussolini, produced a pleasant result: By Nebe's order I was given back my library and almost

all documents which had been confiscated by the Gestapo in spring, 1941."[88] Indeed, Heinrich Himmler was so impressed by Wulff's initial work that he stayed interested in the astrologer, whom he met personally in spring 1944 and continued to consult thereafter. Although it is not clear that Wulff's initial investigation produced anything of relevance, the cooperation between Wulff and the National Socialist authorities paved the way for additional "experiments" conducted by Wulff and his colleagues in subsequent weeks.[89]

Our best source for information on this second round of investigations into Mussolini's whereabouts is none other than the high-ranking SS and RSHA functionary and head of foreign intelligence for the SD Walter Schellenberg, as well as his subordinate Wilhelm Höttl. According to them, in early August 1943—again by order of Himmler—a larger group of astrologers, clarivoyants, pendulum dowsers, and other occultists were brought together in Berlin with the express purpose of finding Mussolini. Because "[we] still did not have any indication where Mussolini was," Schellenberg would later recall, "Himmler . . . had some of those 'representatives of the occult sciences' . . . arrested after Rudolf Hess's flight to England called to a villa on the Wannsee and closed them off there. These were seers, astrologists and pendulum users, who had the task of doing magic tricks to bring the disappeared Duce to light. These séances cost us much money, as these 'scientists' need of good food, drink and tobacco was quite enormous."[90]

Schellenberg's description of the situation was corroborated by Höttl, who was particularly well informed regarding the foreign intelligence activities of National Socialist Germany.[91] In *The Secret Front*, his book on "organisations, people and actions of the German secret service," which was published under his alias in 1953 as *Die Geheime Front*, Höttl reports on the search for Mussolini. Höttl also recalls that Himmler had "a number of seers, pendulum interpreters, astrologists . . . taken from the concentration camps" to the Wannsee. These "[had] frequently [been] been prominent representatives of their discipline," who now, by Himmler's order, had been given the task to find out about Mussolini's whereabouts.[92] In case they were successful, Himmler even promised the occultists "their freedom as well as one hundred thousand Reichsmark." In the end, Höttl gives the number of no fewer than forty (!) people who had been committed to this project and luxuriously treated with food and drink in the villa on the Wannsee. Allegedly, the code name for this action was *Unternehmen Mars* (Operation Mars).[93] Unlike Schellenberg, Höttl was relatively sympathetic to their seemingly epicurean requests, "for understandably those poor devils, who had been living on the starvation rations of the concentrations camps for years, exploited the opportunity to enjoy honeypots, cigarettes and alcohol."[94] If we trust Höttl's reports, this "villa on the Wannsee" was the headquarters of the SS International Criminal Police, which beginning

in 1941 was accommodated at a state building with the address *Am Kleinen Wannsee 16* and beginning in 1942 was headed by Nebe.[95]

Both SS functionaries tell also about an alleged success among the ranks of this group. Höttl conceded to his readers that "at least one of the masters of the Sideric Pendulum found out in those days or made a lucky guess that Mussolini was on an island west of Naples."[96] His superior Schellenberg remarked similarly: "But lo and behold—after some time one 'master' of the Sideric Pendulum found out that Mussolini must be on an island west of Naples. And indeed, Il Duce had at first been taken to one of the small Ponza Islands pointed out by the man. And . . . one must admit that at the time of the experiment this pendulum user had no contact whatsoever with the outside world."[97]

To be sure, in his second book on the SS foreign intelligence service, Höttl had changed his story somewhat. Höttl did confirm that Himmler had collected the "most famous seers, astrologists, pendulum interpreters" in Berlin to investigate Mussolini's whereabouts, as he did not trust the investigations of Germany's secret services.[98] But Höttl was now far from believing that "Himmler's paranormal secret service" was actually successful. On the contrary, he now claimed to have worried that relying on astrologers and clairvoyants would delay Mussolini's liberation. Höttl claims that he used a bit of cunning to convince Himmler to initiate the operation. With the help of the caretaker of that Wannsee villa, whom he knew personally, he presented Himmler intelligence on Mussolini's whereabouts gathered by other, more conventional means, which spurred the *Reichsführer-SS* into action:

> On August 18, Himmler once again paid a visit to his team of occultists on the Wannsee. By giving mysterious hints, a pendulum user from Berlin asked Himmler to come to his room. After some preparations, which could not fail to have effect on Himmler's paranormal mind, he let his pendulum swing over a map of Italy. And, lo and behold, between the islands of Corsica and Sardinia the pendulum clearly came to a halt! Thus the person one was looking for must be on one of the ten small rocky islands between these big islands. The biggest one of these islands . . . is La Maddalena, with a naval base of that same name on its southern coast. Near that base Mussolini was accommodated in a villa, after previously having been imprisoned on the Island of Ponza. . . . Now Himmler was satisfied; he had no doubts anymore . . .; now, after there was evidence that the information presented by the political secret service was correct, he did not have any objections against starting the action.[99]

Thus, according to Höttl's story the alleged insights of the pendulum user were nothing other than a trick to influence Himmler, whose

confidence in occultism was well known: "As a matter of course, that pendulum interpreter was so to speak in my service. Via the caretaker I had as well been able to tell him to explicitly mention the Island of Maddalena, but I had stayed away from that, for too many details could have been suspicious, even if Himmler was unwary when it came to occult matters."[100] As Höttl's accounts are obviously biased, it is not possible today to reconstruct what exactly happened in the villa on the Wannsee or whether the statements by the occultists who had been gathered there in August 1943 did contribute to finding Mussolini. For Otto Skorzeny one thing was clear: "It was Himmler who was said to believe in these always somewhat disputed sciences. I was never told about any positive result of these 'investigations.'"[101]

Based on Höttl and Schellenberg's accounts of Operation Mars, one thing is certain: the Third Reich made a significant effort to employ the same occult specialists whom they had arrested only two years earlier. Among them, for example, was the seer Curt Münch from Saxony. Münch had become famous as a seer in the 1920s, and opened a detective agency at first in Zwickau and then near Chemnitz.[102] After the National Socialist seizure of power, Münch was repeatedly surveilled and harrassed by the authorities, eventually being arrested and imprisoned in Sachsenhausen in the wake of Special Action Hess.[103] After the war, Münch had the misfortune of ending up in the German Democratic Republic, where he was again detained and interrogated by the GDR's state security service regarding his activities in the National Socialist period. In this context, Münch corroborated Höttl and Schellenberg's accounts.

According to Münch, on August 1, 1943, he had been taken from the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen to Berlin, together with other seers, where he was supposed to find out about Il Duce's whereabouts by way of the sidereal pendulum:

> I was given the task of making statements on the whereabouts of the Fascist Mussolini. I told them that I couldn't do so, as I was lacking my syteric [*sic*] Pendulum, as it had been taken from me during my arrest in Chemnitz. So they gave me an ersatz pendulum consisting of a lead solder and a map of Italy. After having worked with the pendulum, I showed them a point on the map and asked if there was an airfield there. They told me that they didn't know, after which I told them "so now we're at a dead spot again, as first I have to make sure that I am right." Then I was taken to another room and left alone. As in the meantime other prisoners were interrogated, two hours later it was back to the camp again. On the next day I was on my own taken to an SS officer wearing plain clothes. He told me that at the place I had pointed out there was an airfield. I explained to this officer that Mossulieu [*sic*] must be left of Rome in the Abruzzo

> Mountains. At this place there must be a mountain railway as well as a huge wall and only a few houses.[104]

Münch was convinced that it had been him who had given important hints by Höttl and that this achievement had contributed to his release from the concentration camp: "Later it turned out that Mussolini was there and was found there by the Fascists. Following the recommendation by the interrogating SS officer, I handed in a petition for my release to the camp commander. So he offered to let me to stay at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp as a camp elder. Insisting on my release, I was freed . . . on October 4th, 1943 . . . [because I was] . . . helpful with the liberation of Mussolini."[105] At the time of his interrogation, in early August 1943, however, Mussolini was still on one of the Ponza islands, not in the mountains as Münch indicated. In fact, he wasn't taken to the Gran Sasso Mountain in the Abruzzo until the end of August—perhaps Münch did in a certain way foresee the course of the kidnapping?

On September 12, 1943, Benito Mussolini was liberated by a German commando of paratroopers from the Hotel *Campo Imperatore* on the Gran Sasso. The crucial hint concerning Mussolini's whereabouts had been given to the commanding general of the paratroopers, Kurt Student, by the SS Security Service in Rome as well as by the captain of a German seaplane squadron stationed on Lago di Bracciano below the Gran Sasso.[106] There is no evidence of any of the intelligence deriving from National Socialist astrologers or by "Himmler's team of occultists." Rather, the SS Security Service had been working feverishly if mostly conventionally to locate Mussolini. If they did not shrink from enlisting the help of allegedly paranormal skills, we may nonetheless suppose that the Himmler, who had a clear affinity for occultism, was chiefly responsible.[107] However, there is no surviving evidence to corroborate the claims of Wulff and company that they successfully employed paranormal methods in the case of locating Mussolini.

V. Between Scientism and Occultism

These two case studies suggest that it is time to revise both theories that have until recently dominated the historiography on occultism in the Third Reich. First, with Special Action Hess of June 1941, the National Socialist regime acted for the first time systematically, comprehensively, and with its typical ruthlessness against "secret doctrines and so called secret sciences." From this time on, occultism and the related fringe sciences were technically outlawed in the Third Reich. Second, beyond the official party doctrine on the question of occultism, scientifically oriented occultists as well as esoteric practitioners in a variety of fields were enlisted by the state so long

as their politics or practices did not all too blatantly contradict the official National Socialist ideology or their "scientist" parameters. Third, the use of these outlawed practices was indeed viewed with suspicion by National Socialist elites, although these practices were also tolerated in the context of military pragmatism. Here, the Third Reich proved flexible in balancing their practical military objectives with their putatively antioccultist ideological convictions. The fourth conclusion is that the role of fringe scientists, occultists, and self-declared paranormal mediums in the Third Reich must be judged in a differentiated way. Depending on the situation and their individual history, occultists were sometimes persecuted and sometimes became opportunistic followers and, in other cases, convinced National Socialists. They were never merely victims. Fifth and finally, in the period of the Third Reich, there were manifold reasons for the state to experiment with fringe-scientific practices. A devotion to occultism was not necessarily a precondition for guiding and legitimating experiments with still unexplained natural powers or paranormal human skills. Nor was every allegedly occult activity the result of the Third Reich's esoteric-occult proclivities in the stricter sense. It might be based on much more pragmatic or even genuinely "scientific" reasons.

These conclusions cause us to rethink both traditional lines of interpretation regarding the position of occultism and fringe sciences under National Socialism. On the one hand, the existing sources suggest that the supervision and in some cases exploitation of occultists and occult practices was of some importance for the National Socialist regime.[108] Significantly, on the other hand, we have hardly any archival evidence indicated the use of paranormal skills by National Socialist authorities themselves. Up to this day, we continue to depend on the few "revelations of eye witnesses" in reconstructing the history of occultism in the Third Reich.[109] While these reports may be the researcher's only window into many such events, in this context they still raise more questions than answers.

Notes

[1] Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub, "'Aberglauben' im Dritten Reich," *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*, November 24, 1945, 4.

[2] Basically Nicolas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: The Ariosophists of Austria and Germany, 1890–1935* (Wellingborough: Aquarian, 1985).

[3] In the following, we will use the term *scientific occultism* as a contemporary name for a (culturally disputed) discipline.

[4] See Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 211–42; Frank-Rutger Hausmann, *Hans Bender (1907–1991) und das "Institut für Psychologie und klinische Psychologie" an der Reichsuniversität Straßburg 1941–1944* (Würzburg: Ergon 2006); Peter Staudenmaier, *Between Occultism and Fascism:*

Anthroposophy and the Politics of Race and Nation in Germany and Italy, 1900–1945 (PhD diss., Cornell University 2010); Eric Kurlander, "Hitler's Monsters: The Occult Roots of Nazism and the Emergence of the Nazi 'Supernatural Imaginary.'" *German History* 30 (2012): 528–49.

[5] E.g., Francis King, *Satan and Swastika* (St. Albans: Mayflower, 1976); E. R. Carmin, *Das schwarze Reich: Geheimgesellschaften und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Nikol, 1997); Paul Roland, *The Nazis and the Occult: The Esoteric Roots of the Third Reich* (London: Foulsham, 2007); Michael Fitzgerald, *Hitler's Occult War* (London: Hale 2009); Michael Fitzgerald, *Storm-Troopers of Satan: An Occult History of the Second World War* (London: Hale, 1990); Franz Wegener, *Heinrich Himmler: Deutscher Spiritismus—Französischer Okkultismus und der Reichsführer SS* (Gladbeck: KFVR, 2004); Franz Wegener, *Der Alchemist Franz Tausend: Alchemie und Nationalsozialismus* (Gladbeck: KFVR, 2006); Peter Levenda, *Unholy Alliance: A History of Nazi Involvement with the Occult*, with a foreword by Norman Mailer (New York: Continuum, 2002; 1st ed. 1995, unfortunately we had no access to this work).

[6] Probably pioneering: Gerda Walther, "Der Okkultismus im Dritten Reich: Teil 3," *Neue Wissenschaft* 1, no. 4 (1950/51): 29–34, or Hans Bender, "Zur Entwicklung der Parapsychologie von 1930–1950," in *Parapsychologie: Die Wissenschaft von den "okkulten" Erscheinungen. Methodik und Theorie. Mit Beiträgen von Joseph B. Rhine und Hans Bender*, ed.Hans Driesch (Zürich: Rascher, 1952), 135–76. See subsequently Elmar Gruber, "Zur historischen Entwicklung der Parapsychologie," in *Die Psychologie des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Gion Condrau, vol. 15, *Transzendenz, Imagination und Kreativität* (Munich: Kindler, 1979), 483–93, or Eberhard Bauer, "Die Welt des Paranormalen und ihre wissenschaftliche Erforschung," in *Aspekte der Paranormologie: Die Welt des Außergewöhnlichen*, ed. Andreas Resch (Innsbruck: Resch, 1992), 243–84; here, 264.

[7] See Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*; Hausmann, *Hans Bender*; Jessica Klein, *Wanderer zwischen den Weltanschauungen: Johannes Maria Verweyen (1883–1945). Ein Philosoph in der "Ära der Apostel"* (Berlin: LIT, 2009).

[8] An analysis of the activties of the parapsychologist Hans Bender at the Reichsuniversität Straßburg since 1941 is presented by Hausmann, *Hans Bender*; the connection of border-scientific thinking and technological-military acting is discussed by Andreas Anton, Uwe Schellinger, and Michael Schetsche, "Schwingende Feindaufklärung: Die Pendelortungsversuche der Deutschen Kriegsmarine 1942," *Journal for Intelligence, Propaganda and Security Studies* 4, no. 1 (2010): 46–63.

[9] Fundamental on this: Rainer F. Schmidt, *Rudolf Heß—"Botengang eines Toren?": Der Flug nach Großbritannien vom 10. Mai 1941* (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1997); furthermore the contributions in David Stafford, ed., *Flight from Reality: Rudolf Hess and His Mission to Scotland, 1941* (London, Pimlico, 2002), as well as Armin Nolzen, "Der Heß-Flug vom 10. Mai 1941 und die öffentliche Meinung im NS-Staat," in *Skandal und Diktatur: Öffentliche Empörung im NS-Staat und in der DDR*, ed. Martin Sabrow (Göttingen: Wallenstein, 2004), 130–56.

[10] See Peter Longerich, *Hitlers Stellvertreter: Führung der Partei und Kontrolle des Staatsapparates durch den Stab Heß und die Partei-Kanzlei Bormann* (Munich: Saur, 1992), 153–54.

[11] Hans Frank, *Im Angesichts des Galgens: Deutung Hitlers und seiner Zeit auf Grund eigener Erlebnisse und Erkenntnisse. Geschrieben im Nürnberger Justizgefängnis* (Munich-Gräfelfing: Beck, 1953), 401.

[12] Longerich, *Hitlers Stellvertreter*, 153–54.; furthermore Institut für Zeitgeschichte München (in the following: IfZ), MA 545:1322–1325 as well as Bundesarchiv Berlin (in the following: BA), NS 18/497.

[13] Max Domarus, ed., *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen 1932–1945. Kommentiert von einem deutschen Zeitgenossen* (Munich: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1965), 2/2:1714; Nolzen, "Der Heß-Flug," 141.

[14] Quot. after IfZ, ED 105, as well as Domarus, *Hitler*, 1715.

[15] BA, R 43-II/1650; see also "Protokoll der 11-Uhr-Konferenz des Reichspropagandaministers vom 14.5.1941," in: BA, R 55/20001g.

[16] Elke Fröhlich, ed., *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: Im Auftrag des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte und mit Unterstützung des Staatlichen Archivdienstes Russlands, Teil I: Aufzeichnungen, 1923–941*, vol. 9, *Dezember 1940–Juli 1941* (Munich: Saur, 1998), 311, 315.

[17] See (unfortunately without detailed reference to archive sources) the description in Ellic Howe, *Uranias Kinder: Die seltsame Welt der Astrologen und das Dritte Reich* (Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995), 259–72; on the particular case of anthroposophy, see Uwe Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus (1933–1945)* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999), 301–43; recently: Staudenmaier, *Between Occultism and Fascism*, 354–409, and Uwe Schellinger, "Die 'Sonderaktion Heß' im Juni 1941: Beschlagnahmung und Verwertung von Buchbeständen der 'Geheimlehren' und 'Geheimwissenschaften,'" in *NS-Raubgut in Museen, Bibliotheken und Archiven: Viertes Hannoversches Symposium*, by order of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Bibliothek—Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, ed. Regine Dehnel (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2012), 317–41.

[18] BA, R 58/1029, fols. 58–70.

[19] BA, R 58/1029: fol. 59. Obviously, already since 1936 the Secret Service of the SS had been preparing extensive lists of the names of astrologists; see BA, R 58/6201, pt. 3.

[20] Fröhlich, *Die Tagebücher*, 370.

[21] Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, 213; even earlier, see Ellic Howe, *Urania's Children: The Strange World of the Astrologers* (London: Kimber, 1967), 202; initially, Ellic Howe, *Nostradamus and the Nazis: A Footnote to the History of the Third Reich* (London: Arborfield, 1965), 74–84.

[22] BA, R 58/1029: fol. 65.

[23] Werner Rahn und Gerhard Schreiber, *Kriegstagebuch der Seekriegsleitung 1939–1945: Teil A*, vol 39, bk.1, *1. bis 15. November 1942* (Herford: Mittler, 1993), facsimile 18.

[24] Wilhelm Th. H. Wulff, "Hitler, Himmler und die Sterne," pt. 1, *Hamburger Abendblatt*, October 14, 1948; Wilhelm Th. H. Wulff, "Hitler, Himmler und die Sterne," pt. 2, *Hamburger Abendblatt*, October 16, 1948; Wilhelm Th. Wulff, "Hitler, Himmler und die Sterne," pt. 3, *Hamburger Abendblatt*, October 18, 1948.

[25] Gerda Walther, *ESP in the German Navy*, unpublished manuscript (1949), in: Archiv des Instituts für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene e.V. Freiburg i. Br. (in the following: IGPP-Archiv), E/21: Korrespondenz mit Gerda Walther 1946–1953, not yet filed; Walther, "Der Okkultismus," 20–34; Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus zum Atheismus zum Christentum* (Remagen: Reichl, 1960), 599–602; Walther, "Hitler's Black Magicians," *Tomorrow* 2 (1956): 7–23. For a biography, see Heinrich Eppe, "Gerda Walther (1897–1977): Ihr zwiefacher Weg 'aus dem Dunkel zum Licht,'" in *Aufbrüche—Seitenpfade—Abwege: Suchbewegungen und Subkulturen im 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Ulrich Linse*, ed, Judith Baumgartner and Bernd Wedemeyer-Kolwe (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), 91–97; see also the autobiography Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer*.

[26] See Howe, *Urania's Children*, 237–39; Howe, *Uranias Kinder*, 317–18; Jacque Huse, "ESPionage," *Esotera* 27 (1967), 507–8; Wolfgang Bock, *Astrologie und Aufklärung: Über modernen Aberglauben* (Stuttgart: M & P, 1995), 316–18; Levenda, *Unholy Alliance*, 229–32.

[27] Anonymous, "Hokuspokus für den Endsieg," in *Sylt: Abenteuer einer Insel*, ed. Sven Simon (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1980), 258–59; Karl Heinz Reger, "Die Abteilung SP," *Esotera* 33 (1982): 410–18.

[28] On this, see Anton, Schellinger, and Schetsche, "Schwingende Feindaufklärung."

[29] See Rahn and Schreiber, *Kriegstagebuch der Seekriegsleitung*, facsimile 18.

[30] Deutsche Gesellschaft für wissenschaftlichen Okkultismus, letter to Amtsgericht Berlin, October 10, 1938, in: Landesarchiv Berlin (in the following: LAB), B Rep. 042-Nr. 26390, fol. 112.

[31] See the progress report 1937–39, in: LAB, A Pol. Prä. Rep. 030-04-Nr. 327, fols. 9–16.

[32] On this see BA, R 55/20001a u. BA, R 55/20001d, sowie Howe, *Nostradamus*; Howe, *Uranias Kinder*, 245–58; Bock, *Astrologie und Aufklärung*, 310–14.

[33] Konrad Schuppe, letter to the *Polizeipräsident* in Berlin, September 25, 1939, in: LAB, A Pol. Prä. Rep. 030-04-Nr. 327, fol. 18.

[34] LAB, B Rep. 042-Nr. 26390, fols. 128–29; Konrad Schuppe, letter to the *Polizeipräsident* in Berlin, October 30, 1939, in: LAB, A Pol. Prä. Rep. 030-04-Nr. 327, fol. 18; siehe auch Howe, *Uranias Kinder*, 248.

[35] In a letter from March 29, 1941, Chairman Schuppe expressed his regrets that, due to the war, it was impossible to hold a general assembly of the association. See Konrad Schuppe, letter to the *Amtsgericht* Berlin, March 29, 1941, in: LAB, B Rep. 042-Nr. 26390, fol. 138.

[36] Konrad Schuppe, letter to the *Polizeipräsident* in Berlin, September 23, 1939, in: LAB, A Pol. Prä. Rep. 030-04 Nr. 327, fol. 17.

[37] For example, the Navy Intelligence Service supported research on "Optical Location"; an "invisible, active location method" was supposed to be developed. See Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg i. Br. (in the following: BA-MA), RM 7/1240; Bericht "Organisation der deutschen Schwingungsforschung für den U-Bootkrieg," July 7, 1943, in: BA-MA, RM 7/98; Bericht

"Kriegsmarine—Arbeitsgemeinschaft V: Schwingungsforschung für den U-Boot-Krieg / Tagung vom 16.12.1943," in: BA-MA, RM 24-TR/84/4316.

[38] See BA-MA, RM 8/1587; "Tätigkeitsbericht der Amtsgruppe FEP für 1943 vom 27.3.1944," in: BA-MA, RM 7/1240.

[39] BA-MA, RM 7/98; "Tätigkeitsbericht der Amtsgruppe FEP für 1943," in: BA-MA, RM 7/1240.

[40] Already in the First World War, Roeder, who came from Hamburg-Hohenfelde, had served on U-boats as an officer and U-boat commander of the Imperial Navy. In 1919, at first he left the service, holding the rank of a lieutenant commander, to then work as an engineer. On October 1, 1935, Roeder was promoted a reserve corvette captain and finally, on July 19, 1939, made a member of the officers corps again. See Anton, Schellinger and Schetsche, "Schwingende Feindaufklärung," 50–51, 54, 60, 62; Walter Lohmann and Hans H. Hildebrand, *Die Deutsche Kriegsmarine 1939–1945: Gliederung–Einsatz–Stellenbesetzung* (Bad Nauheim: Podzun, 1956), 1:291, 301.

[41] Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer*, 600.

[42] Hans A. Roeder, Bremerhaven, letter to Hans Bender, September 30, 1952, in IGPP-Archiv, E/23: Erdstrahlen. Wünschelrute. Pendel (1949–75), not yet filed.

[43] See Wulff, "Hitler, Himmler," part 1. For the time being, there exists no thorough biography of Wulff, see his autobiography: Wilhelm Th. H. Wulff, *Tierkreis und Hakenkreuz: Als Astrologe an Himmlers Hof* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Sachbuchverlag, 1968). English version: Wilhelm Th. H. Wulff, *Zodiac and Swastika* (London: Barker, 1973).

[44] See Anton, Schellinger, and Schetsche, "Schwingende Feindaufklärung," 51.

[45] See Wilhelm Hartmann, "Transneptunische Planeten." *Astrologische Blätter* 8 (1926): 293–98, 341–44, 384–87, 417–18; Wilhelm Hartmann, *Beitrag zur Geschichte und Theorie der astronomischen Instrumente mit rotierendem Planspiegel und fester Reflexrichtung (Heliostat, Siderostat, Zölostat, Uranostat)* (PhD diss., University of Hamburg, 1928).

[46] See the appropriate file in the register of associations in LAB, B Rep. 042-Nr. 26390, as well as the police file, in: LAB, A Pol. Prä. Rep. 030-04-Nr. 327; LAB, Einwohnermeldekartei, B Rep. 021.

[47] Walther, *ESP*; Walther, "Der Okkultismus," 31–32.

[48] See on himself: Hans-Hermann Kritzinger, *Über die Bewegung des Roten Fleckens auf dem Planeten Jupiter* (PhD diss. University of Berlin, 1911), on pages 70–71, Kritzinger offers his "Lebenslauf" (autobiography); Anton, Schellinger and Schetsche, "Schwingende Feindaufklärung," 53–54.

[49] Hans-Hermann Kritzinger, *Magische Kräfte: Geheimnisse der menschlichen Seele* (Berlin: Neufeld & Henius, 1922); Hans-Hermann Kritzinger, *Mysterien von Sonne und Seele: Psychische Studien und Klärung der okkulten Probleme* (Berlin u.a.: Universitas Buch und Kunst, 1922).

[50] See Hans-Hermann Kritzinger and Friedrich Stuhlmann, eds., *Artillerie und Ballistik in Stichworten* (Berlin: Springer, 1939).

[51] Kritzinger, *Mysterien*, 113–43.

[52] On this see Howe, *Uranias Kinder*, 219–23, 245–48; Anton, Schellinger, and Schetsche, "Schwingende Feindaufklärung," 61.

[53] See Kritzinger, *Mysterien*, 27–41, as well as Hans-Hermann Kritzinger, *Todesstrahlen und Wünschelrute: Beiträge zur Schicksalkunde* (Leipzig: Grethlein, 1929); Hans-Hermann Kritzinger, *Erdstrahlen, Reizstreifen und Wünschelrute: Neue Versuche zur Abwendung krankmachender Einflüsse, auf Grund eigener Forschungen* (Dresden: Rudolph, 1933).

[54] Walther, *ESP*.

[55] Walther, *ESP*.

[56] Walther, "Der Okkultismus," 32.

[57] Werner Rahn, "Warnsignale und Selbstgewissheit: Der deutsche Marine-Nachrichtendienst und die vermeintliche Sicherheit des Schlüssels M ('Enigma') 1943/44," *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 61 (2002): 145–54; on this see also David Kahn, *Seizing the Enigma: The Race to Break the German U-Boat Codes, 1939–1943* (Boston, MA: Mifflin, 1991), as well as Heinz Ulbricht, *Die Chiffriermaschine Enigma: Trügerische Sicherheit* (Saarbrücken: VDM, 2007).

[58] See Clay Blair, *Der U-Boot-Krieg: Die Jäger 1939–1942* (Munich: Bechtermünz, 1998); Clay Blair, *Der U-Boot-Krieg: Die Gejagten 1942–1945* (Munich: Bechtermünz, 1999).

[59] Reger, "Die Abteilung SP," 418.

[60] Ludwig Straniak, *Die achte Groß-Kraft der Natur und ihre physikalischen Gesetze* (Diessen: Huber, 1936). As a pendulum expert, Straniak published quite a lot. See Ludwig Straniak, "Beitrag zur Theorie des siderischen Pendels," *Zentralarchiv der Pendelforschung* 3, no. 6 (1933): 70–72; Ludwig Straniak, "Aus meiner Arbeit," in *Die Wahrheit über das Pendel: Wissenschaftliche Forschungen der letzten 25 Jahre*, ed. Christoff Dietrich (Diessen: Huber, 1936), 90–91; Ludwig Straniak, "Der Bährsche Ablenkungswille," in *Die Wahrheit über das Pendel: Wissenschaftliche Forschungen der letzten 25 Jahre*, ed. Christoff Dietrich (Diessen: Huber, 1936), 100–104; Ludwig Straniak, *Das siderische Pendel als Indikator der achten Naturkraf* (Rudolstadt: Gesundes Leben, 1937). He was the coeditor as well as coauthor of the series of publications *Beiträge zur Pendelforschung*, edited from 1937 to 1939, and the coeditor of the magazine *Wissenschaftliche Pendelforschung in Theorie und Praxis*.

[61] See, for example, K. Huber, "Die Gleichschaltung der Gemeinschaft von Pendelforschern in die N.S. Pendlergemeinschaft," *Zentralarchiv der Pendelforschung* 3, no. 6 (1933): 74–76; Leopold Graf Thun-Hohenstein, *Die Natur der Radiästhesie: Zum Problem der geistigen Erneuerung der Gegenwart* (Prag: Als Manuskript gedruckt, 1941); see also Jens Henkel, "Der Verlag 'Gesundes Leben' Mellenbach Rudolstadt: Von den lebensreformerischen Ideen des Wilhelm Hotz zu den Pendelforschungen von Karl Dietz," *Blätter der Gesellschaft für Buchkultur und Geschichte* 6 (2002): 83–144.

[62] Christoff Dietrich, ed., *Die Wahrheit über das Pendel: Wissenschaftliche Forschungen der letzten 25 Jahre* (Diessen: Huber, 1936), 11.

[63] Henkel, "Der Verlag 'Gesundes Leben,'" 112–25.

[64] Wulff, "Hitler, Himmler," part 2.

[65] Hans A. Roeder, letter to Hans Bender, September 30, 1952, in: IGPP-Archiv, E/23: Akte Erdstrahlen. Wünschelrute. Pendel (1949–75, not yet filed.

[66] Walther, *ESP*; Walther, "Der Okkultismus," 30–31.

[67] Wulff, "Hitler, Himmler," part 2.

[68] Walther, "Der Okkultismus," 31.

[69] Wulff, "Hitler, Himmler," part 2.

[70] See Hausmann, *Hans Bender*, 110–11.

[71] Wulff, "Hitler, Himmler," part 2.

[72] Walther, "Der Okkultismus," 31.

[73] Wulff, "Hitler, Himmler," part 2.

[74] Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer*, 600; Walther, "Der Okkultismus," 33.

[75] Anonymous, "Hokuspokus für den Endsieg," 259.

[76] Walther, *ESP*.

[77] Rahn and Schreiber, *Kriegstagebuch der Seekriegsleitung*, facsimile 18.

[78] Cf. BA, NS 18/421.

[79] See Treitel, *Science for the Soul*, 210–48.

[80] Much of the literature on the liberation of Mussolini from various camps is not particularly critical: Hermann Götzel, *Generaloberst Kurt Student und seine Fallschirmjäger: Die Erinnerungen des Generaloberst Kurt Student* (Friedberg: Podzun-Pallas, 1980), esp. 408–35; Georg Schlaug, *Die deutschen Lastensegler-Verbände 1937–1945: Eine Chronik aus Berichten, Tagebüchern, Dokumenten* (Stuttgart: Motorbuch, 1985), esp. 184–90. See furthermore Greg Annussek, *Hitler's Raid to Save Mussolini: The Most Infamous Commando Operation of World War II* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2005); Robert Forczyk, *Rescuing Mussolini: Gran Sasso 1943* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010); Marco Patricelli, *Libertate il Duce! Gran Sasso, 1943: La vera storia dell' Operazione Quercia* (Brezzo di Bedero: Hobby & Work, 2010). Arguably the most detailed depiction of the liberation action in the German language is: Josef Schröder, "Zur Befreiung Mussolinis im Sommer 1943," in Josef Schröder, *Hitler und Mussolini: Aspekte der deutsch-italienischen Beziehungen 1930–1943. Festgabe zum 70. Geburtstag am 7. März 2007*, ed. Carl August Lückerath and Michael Salewski (Gleichen-Zurich: Muster-Schmidt, 2007), 191–217.

[81] Otto Skorzeny, *Geheimkommando Skorzeny* (Hamburg: Hansa Verlag Josef Toth, 1950), 116.

[82] See, among others, Levenda, *Unholy Alliance*, 226–29; Roland, *Nazis and the Occult*, 133; Wegener, *Heinrich Himmler*, 58–60; Stephan Berndt, *Hellseher und Astrologen im Dienste der Macht: Die geheimen Einflüsse auf Politiker und Herrscher* (Graz: Stocker, 2011), 241.

[83] Annussek, *Hitler's Raid*, 92–94; Patricelli: *Libertate il Duce!*, 40.

[84] Wulff, "Hitler, Himmler," part 5, *Hamburger Abendblatt*, October 23, 1948.

[85] Wulff, "Hitler, Himmler," part 5, Allegedly, Wulff gave a place 75 kilometers southeast of Rome as Mussolini's first stay. He directly connected this to the actual place, the island of Ponza.

[86] [Bernd Wehner], "Das Spiel ist aus—Arthur Nebe: Glanz und Elend der Kriminalpolizei," *Der Spiegel*, September 29, 1949, 20–25, esp. 20–22. The former criminal investigation and SS officer Bernd Wehner (1909–1995) is considered the author of this biased *Spiegel* series of thirty articles, to which also this one belongs. In the postwar period, he at first worked for *Der Spiegel* and made his further career in the police service again; see Wulff, *Tierkreis und Hakenkreuz*, 123–30, 235–44.

[87] Wulff, *Tierkreis und Hakenkreuz*, 124–25.

[88] Wulff, *Tierkreis und Hakenkreuz*, 129. On the confiscation of appropriate libraries of astrologists and secret scientists in the course of Special Action Hess, see Schellinger, "Die 'Sonderaktion Heß.'"

[89] Wulff's work for Nebe is mentioned, among others, in [Wehner], "Das Spiel ist aus"; Bernd Wehner: "Selbstbezichtiger—Geistesgestörte—Übersinnliche: Über die Anwendung übersinnlicher Methoden im polizeilichen Ermittlungsverfahren," *Kriminalistik* 32, no. 3 (1978): 111–14; Wegener, *Heinrich Himmler*, 58–59; Annussek: *Hitler's Raid*, 93–94; Levenda, *Unholy Alliance*, 229; Roland, *Nazis and the Occult*, 133. On the other hand, it is not mentioned in the often quoted work *Urania's Children* by Howe, as Howe did not want to leapfrog his important source, Wulff, with his own publication. See Howe, *Urania's Children*, 239; German edition: Howe, *Uranias Kinder*.

[90] Wilhelm Schellenberg, *Memoiren*, ed. Gita Petersen (Köln: Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1959), 301. On Schellenberg, see Reinhard R. Doerries, *Hitler's Intelligence Chief: Walter Schellenberg* (New York: Enigma Books, 2009).

[91] Karin Paehler, "Ein Spiegel seiner selbst: Der SD-Ausland in Italien," in *Nachrichtendienst, politische Elite und Mordeinheit: Der Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers SS*, ed. Michael Wildt (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition 2003), 241–66, esp. 241–42n2. On Wilhelm Höttl (1915–99), see furthermore: Thorsten Querg, "Wilhelm Höttl: Vom Informanten zum Sturmbannführer im Sicherheitsdienst der SS," in *Historische Rassismusforschung: Ideologen—Täter—Opfer*, ed. Barbara Danckwort, Thorsten Querg, and Claudia Schöningh (Hamburg: Argument-Verlag, 1995), 208–30; Doerries, *Hitler's Intelligence Chief*.

[92] Walter Hagen [i.e., Wilhelm Höttl], *Die Geheime Front: Organisation, Personen und Aktionen des deutschen Geheimdienstes* (Stuttgart: Veritas Verlag, 1953), 403. Höttl repeated this in his memories published in 1997, two years before his death. See Wilhelm Höttl, *Einsatz für das Reich* (Koblenz: Siegfried Bublies, 1997), 287.

[93] Walter Hagen [i.e., Wilhelm Höttl], *Unternehmen Bernhard: Ein historischer Tatsachenbericht über die größte Geldfälschungsaktion aller Zeiten* (Wels-Starnberg: Welsermühl, 1955), 135–37.

[94] Hagen, *Die Geheime Front*, 403.

[95] See Höttl, *Einsatz für das Reich*, 287. On this see Jens Jäger, *Verfolgung durch Verwaltung: Internationale Verbrechen und internationale Polizeikooperation 1880–1933* (Konstanz: UVK, 2006), 370–76, esp. 373–74.

[96] Hagen, *Die Geheime Front*, 403; Höttl, *Einsatz für das Reich*, 287.

[97] Schellenberg, *Memoiren*, 301.

[98] Hagen, *Unternehmen Bernhard*, 135–37.

[99] Hagen, *Unternehmen Bernhard*, 137.

[100] Hagen, *Unternehmen Bernhard*, 135–37.

[101] Skorzeny, *Geheimkommando Skorzeny*, 116.

[102] On Curt Münch (1882–1966), see H. Hänig, "Ein Hellseher in Westsachsen," *Psychische Studien* 50, no. 7 (1923): 316–25, as well as Annaliese Nissen, "Der Hellseher Curt Münch," *Neue Wissenschaft* 15, no. 1/2 (1967): 119–24.

[103] Information by *Gedenkstätte und Museum Sachsenhausen* to Uwe Schellinger on November 13, 2011, by way of 1946 questionnaire filled in by Münch (to be found at the archive of the memorial).

[104] Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin (BStU), Karl-Marx-Stadt, AOP Beiakte 32/54a/I (Beobachtungsvorgang 17/55), fols. 54, 64.

[105] Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin (BStU), Karl-Marx-Stadt, AOP Beiakte 32/54a/I (Beobachtungsvorgang 17/55), fols. 52–54, 64.

[106] Annussek, *Hitler's Raid*; Schröder, "Zur Befreiung Mussolinis," 207; Patricelli, *Liberate il Duce!*, 191–98; Götzel, *Generaloberst Kurt Student*, 414–26.

[107] On Himmler's personal interest in occultist topics, in particular the world ice theory and astrology, see Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler: Biographie* (Munich: Siedler, 2008), 289–96; popular-scientific: Wegener, *Heinrich Himmler*.

[108] On this see recently in detail Staudenmaier, *Between Occultism and Fascism*, as well as Schellinger, "Die 'Sonderaktion Heß.'"

[109] Hartlaub, "'Aberglauben' im Dritten Reich."

8: Disruptive Potential: Therese Neumann of Konnersreuth, National Socialism, and Democracy

Michael E. O'Sullivan

I

Few biographies in modern German history provide as many dynamic encounters with the occult as that of stigmatic Therese Neumann (1898–1962) from the small town of Konnersreuth in the Bavarian countryside. She became a religious phenomenon from 1926 until her death, bleeding from her eyes, feet, and hands and hearing heavenly voices in ecstasy before devoted followers for thirty-five years. She also allegedly spoke archaic languages during her trances, experienced miraculous cures, and subsisted exclusively on communion hosts. Although accused by many of fraud, she developed a group of advocates known as the Konnersreuth Circle and her beatification process began in 2005 after Church authorities received 45,000 letters of support.[1] Her alleged connection with the Christian supernatural and popularity with millions of Catholics worldwide made her an uneasy figure for the hierarchy of the Church as well as a National Socialist regime that sought strict social conformity. Her presence as a public figure from the middle years of the Weimar Republic through the Third Reich and the first years of the Federal Republic likewise provides a unique window into the continuities and discontinuities of occult, religious, and paranormal thinking during this tumultuous period in German history.

The life of Neumann's most famous supporter, Fritz Gerlich, illustrates the potential for controversy that her stigmata posed both to the institutional Church and the totalitarian state. Initially a liberal Calvinist journalist who visited Konnersreuth to prove Neumann's dramatic ecstasy a fake, Gerlich became convinced instead of her holiness and converted to Catholicism. After publishing two books defending the authenticity of Therese Neumann's stigmata, Gerlich started a newspaper, *Der gerade Weg* (The straight path), which challenged the political establishment at the end of the Weimar Republic. Devoted to strident confrontation with Communism and National Socialism, the newspaper also critiqued

Gerlich's own Bavarian People's Party (BVP) for cooperating with Social Democrats during the Weimar period. A wealthy aristocrat from the Konnersreuth Circle funded the project.

It was a prophecy by Therese Neumann herself that sparked Gerlich's interest in starting the newspaper that ultimately cost him his life in Dachau on the infamous June 30, 1934, Night of the Long Knives, when the Third Reich settled scores with hundreds of political opponents including a few prominent Catholics. In fact, Gerlich regularly sought answers from Neumann while in her so-called state of exalted rest on Fridays regarding the everyday functioning of *Der gerade Weg*.[2]

Neumann's power over prominent men like Gerlich, although far from unlimited, at times overturned the established order within the Church. In this instance, her circle created a newspaper from outside the structures of political Catholicism and the Catholic milieu of confessional associations. It publically challenged party bosses of the BVP, such as Heinrich Held; embarrassed several leaders of the Center Party, including Chancellor Heinrich Brüning; and sometimes presented doctrine in ways that diverged with mainstream Catholic teaching. Such unpredictable developments contributed to the cautious skepticism of Church leaders, such as Regensburg Bishop Michael Buchberger. Furthermore, the combination of Neumann's perceived sacredness and Gerlich's contrarian demeanor generated the fearlessness needed to challenge politically violent movements like National Socialism. By late 1932, Gerlich knew a Nazi rise to power endangered his life, but he proceeded with the newspaper anyway. The avid faith of Neumann's circle as well as their strong connections to the BVP sparked careful surveillance by the new dictatorship.[3] While Gerlich's death amounted to an act of vengeance for his politics during the late Weimar era, Neumann's mystical influence over such figures made her a potential threat to Nazi control over rural Bavaria.

II

Despite the sensationalism of the Konnersreuth miracles and numerous books and essays regarding Therese Neumann's potential beatification and medical peculiarities, academic treatments of this stigmatic remain sparse. The most common belief about Therese Neumann under Nazism is that she and her supporters formed a "nest of resistance." Promoted primarily by her hagiographers, historian Rudolf Morsey also supports such a view in his publication of Gerlich's correspondence.[4] Anthropologist Ulrike Wiethaus provides an alternative viewpoint, arguing that Therese Neumann represented the resistance of a rural culture against a modernizing and centralizing nation state. This thesis buttresses the more general claim by Thomas Breuer that rural Bavarian Catholic discord with Nazism constituted a protest against modernity rather than National Socialist

ideology.[5] While the Konnersreuth Circle undoubtedly rebelled against elements of totalitarianism and challenged modern consumerist values, this movement contained too many layers of ambiguity to be exclusively labeled anti-Nazi or antimodern. Instead Maria Anna Zumholz's thorough examination of several apparitions of the Virgin Mary by four girls in Heede, a rural town in northern Germany, offers the best academic model for assessing Konnersreuth. She argues that the combination of a strong institutional Church milieu with local traditions of popular piety threatened the National Socialist order in the Emsland. Infusing traditional folk culture with modern meaning, the Heede visionaries and their supporters undercut the National Socialist desire for totalitarian control from 1938 to 1940 but never genuinely threatened the state's ability to function.[6] Zumholz's scholarship provides not only a useful interpretative framework, but her focus on Marian piety also highlights how apparitions of the Virgin Mary in the late nineteenth century and mid-twentieth century contextually framed the Konnersreuth miracles. Catholics and non-Catholics alike reacted to Therese Neumann through the lens of modern Marian miracles constructed in Lourdes (1858, France), Marpingen (1876, Germany), and Heede.

One of the main reasons for the academic silence regarding Konnersreuth is the inaccessibility of many sources. Since the beatification process began in 2005, the diocese of Regensburg closed the previously open files about Therese Neumann. Furthermore, much of the most significant correspondence from within the Konnersreuth Circle had been secured by a documentation center in Konnersreuth, which is now also unavailable to researchers other than those on the historical commission considering her beatification. While this chapter attempts one of the first scholarly analyses of Neumann under the Third Reich, some conclusions remain tentative until Church authorities release further documentation. Despite these obstacles, the files of Therese Neumann's opponents as well as material in archives outside of Regensburg contain much primary material. The personal papers of Jesuit Johann Baptist Westermayr and Franciscan Georg Wunderle are particularly useful given the extensive correspondence of both men with multiple bishops, government figures, and critics of Konnersreuth. Local gendarmes submitted regular reports about Therese Neumann from 1926 to 1938 as well. Finally, Maria Anna Zumholz generously shared selected copies from the Regensburg collection made twenty years ago before its closure.[7] This source base provides enough data to reconstruct the overall relationship between the Konnersreuth Circle, the Catholic Church, and the Third Reich, illustrating the power and limits of mystical religious faith under a totalitarian regime.

This essay assesses the ambiguities of Therese Neumann's reputation as a bleeding oracle during the Third Reich. After a tidal wave of

press coverage, millions of visitors, and turbulent literary battles over her authenticity during the waning years of the Weimar Republic, Therese Neumann entered the Third Reich with a strong infrastructure of support that survived a violent social and cultural coordination by the Third Reich, including the coerced dissolution of most religious lay associations and newspapers. Despite a decline in press coverage and pilgrims, she continually flustered an institutional Church divided about her legitimacy and defiance of hierarchical authority. Other Catholics provided both the fiercest devotion to and most ardent hatred of the Bavarian stigmatic. The NSDAP, however, viewed Neumann with a mixture of fear, respect, and fascination but ultimately remained concerned about her ability to disturb the social uniformity their state hoped to achieve. This chapter argues that Therese Neumann of Konnersreuth possessed tremendous capacity to disrupt both Church and state during the Third Reich, but she survived the era to become a hero of the early Federal Republic because of her failure to entirely fulfill this potential. Her persistently captivated followers formed a power base that concerned Catholic and Nazi authorities, but Neumann's unwillingness to transgress certain barriers prevented excommunication by the Church or incarceration by the state. In sum, this episode of the supernatural troubled religious and political leadership but never undermined the fundamental legitimacy of the Nazi dictatorship.

III

Therese Neumann encountered mass exposure before and after the Third Reich, but contact with the public declined under Nazism. During the first two years after her cures and stigmata, thousands of uninvited guests appeared at the doorstep of her simple home in Konnersreuth. On average, two thousand visitors arrived per week to view her blood-soaked face or inquire about the fate of dead relatives.[8] During this time period, Konnersreuth received overwhelming coverage from multiple groups outside the Catholic subculture and National Socialist movement that otherwise form the focal points of this essay. For example, the Communist press in Berlin plunged Neumann into the center of political jousts characteristic of the late Weimar period. Joining many liberal press organs in asserting fraudulence by the Neumann family, various Communist publications, such as *Rotes Echo* (Red Echo), depicted Konnersrueth as a new Lourdes that would soon brim with shops marketing religious kitsch, and they accused the clergy of tolerating faith in the miracles to financially profit its own institutions.[9] This rhetoric not only converged with a tradition of secular anticlericalism but also buttressed attempts to link political Catholicism to the corrupt capitalist enterprises that Communists held responsible for the economic plight of the 1920s. The same set of Communist newspapers also connected Neumann to a political dialogue on

sexuality and morals between the left-wing parties and Catholic politicians. They suggested that trauma from the moral repression of the Church caused her bleeding and claims to supernatural power. Outside the political realm, Neumann became a feature of the tabloid press, and was mostly presented in sensationalist stories. This trend culminated in articles falsely claiming that Neumann had had an illegitimate child prior to her religious fame, and in a Berlin play (unsanctioned by the family) about her life.[10] Some Konnersreuth visitors and journalists indulged neither the politics of Konnersreuth nor the spectacle but articulated genuine fascination with a woman whom they deemed authentic but not religious. This perspective emanated from some less sensational regional newspapers and tabloids and especially from the field of parapsychology.[11] The sheer volume of press coverage and the numerous cultural tropes engaged by non-Catholics when observing the Konnersreuth affair indicate Neumann's power to disrupt and in some ways shape the culture of the Weimar Republic. A period where neither Church nor state limited coverage of Konnersreuth unveiled the multiple frameworks through which Germans engaged with supernatural phenomena.

Tired of such widespread attention, the diocese of Regensburg banned all visitors without special permission from Church hierarchy while they investigated the case in 1928, reducing Friday visitors to between 100 and 350 pilgrims.[12] An impressive parade of bishops, theologians, psychologists, doctors, scientists, and journalists from all over the world still sought an audience in Konnersreuth. The publications of several of these visitors reached a wide audience. The *Konnersreuther Sonntagsblatt* (Konnersreuth Sunday Paper) attracted a national following of ten thousand subscriptions by early 1928.[13] During the Third Reich, Bishop Buchberger ceased granting special permission for visits to Neumann, which cut the number of visitors significantly. Furthermore, the censorship of the press prevented the lurid accounts of Neumann's Friday bleeding, her visions of the crucifixion and numerous other biblical scenes, and revelations during a state of ecstasy that were commonplace in numerous newspapers and books during the Weimar Republic.

Regardless of her temporary disappearance from the public sphere, Neumann remained a powerful presence. A report by a student who visited Konnersreuth in the summer of 1938 indicates persistent faith in her mysticism by both locals and outsiders. This student interviewed numerous farmers from Konnersreuth, all of whom attested to her authenticity and good works. They recounted a woman that Neumann healed from a deadly disease through vicarious suffering and a thirty-six-year-old man whom she cured on his death bed. They vigorously attested to the truthfulness of her fasting and her conversion of lapsed Catholics. The anonymous student also reported the visitation of twenty outsiders besides himself who hoped for a glimpse of Neumann during her "Friday

suffering."[14] This grassroots support, built upon supernatural intercession, created a powerful base that stood outside the usual institutions of Church power.

A mixture of Capuchins, Carmelite nuns, university theologians, Catholic doctors, and aristocrats, Neumann's inner circle remained ardent in their support during the Third Reich and at times contested the institutional authority of the Church. The most aggressive of her publicists, Friedrich Lama, viewed Neumann as a sign of salvation in apocalyptic times. He warned openly of apocalypse in a "godless" age: "Therese Neumann's bloody tears are, it is my conviction, the expression of divine sorrow over the base ingratitude of the world, which owes its existence to God. . . . Therefore the bloody tears constitute another of the final warnings to mankind, which stands on the edge of the abyss."[15] His passion for Catholic mysticism grew largely from past support for miracles at unsanctioned Marian apparition sites around Europe, including Germany's Marpingen. Lama used Neumann's direct access to God to discredit the Church he felt abandoned her during the 1930s, elevating her as the most important of a series of twentieth-century Catholic seers to bring God's unfiltered word directly to the people. He regularly suggested that the Bavarian Bishops' Conference no longer stood as the true Church for him any longer.[16] Although Neumann and Father Josef Naber, her priest and spiritual mentor, frequently dissociated themselves from Lama's rhetoric, many viewed him as her spokesperson and bristled at the threat to clerical authority.[17]

Nobody represented the Church's uneasiness with insubordination from Konnersreuth more than Therese Neumann's own bishop, Michael Buchberger of Regensburg. A protégé of Cardinal Michael Faulhaber of Munich, Buchberger became a supporter of the BVP during the Weimar Republic but vehemently opposed both Communism and Social Democracy. This fear of the radical left as well as a concern over maintaining the unusually high level of Catholic religious practice in his diocese made him politically circumspect during the Third Reich. Hoping to avoid conflict with the regime, he encouraged internal forms of religiosity that would avoid competition with Nazism in civic spaces. This careful desire to protect the institutions and sacramental mission of the Church at the expense of piety and politics in the public sphere increased his concern with the Konnersreuth miracles.[18] Caught in between Neumann's vocal critics and passionate supporters, Buchberger devoted decades to cautiously distancing the diocese from the stigmata without condemning or excommunicating the Konnersreuth Circle. He articulated his numerous reservations in a letter to Bishop Augustinius Killian of Limburg in 1930, fulminating about Neumann's unorthodox spirituality and the lack of obedience to Church authority. He complained that she functioned as an "oracle" and "information bureau" for pilgrims with questions about the

souls of dead relatives, sicknesses, marriage proposals, and even theological questions that could have been posed to parish priests. He expressed aggravation with Neumann's assertion while in ecstasy that an excommunicated priest from Freiburg made his way into heaven. Furthermore, her circle's public campaign in favor of Neumann's sanctity seemed outrageous. Buchberger sarcastically wrote, "The so-called Konnersreuth Circle knows everything and the Bishop knows very little." Finally, the bishop expressed exasperation over the years of fruitless negotiations to send Neumann to a medical clinic to test the authenticity of her fasting, which conformed with the Church's longstanding desire for strict medical support for any institutionally approved miracle. Neumann's father, Ferdinand, and Father Naber both opposed this step, and Neumann seemingly acquiesced to their will. For all of these reasons, the Bavarian Bishops' Conference released a statement in 1932 criticizing the family for not submitting to the Church examination, and Buchberger refused to grant any more sanctioned visits to Konnersreuth.[19]

Buchberger, however, never used the hammer of excommunication or even the relocation of Father Naber to force his will on the Neumann family. This resulted in part from their unwillingness to transgress several boundaries regarding Church authority as well as Buchberger's careful protection of the status quo that involved placating both Neumann critics and her devotees. First, Ferdinand Neumann refused most visitors who lacked official documentation from Buchberger after the bishop's 1928 demand that the stream of pilgrims decrease until the Church made an official declaration. Therefore the Friday crowds declined from thousands to hundreds and further to a few dozen during the Third Reich. Therese Neumann also disowned some of her most strident supporters, such as Lama, in letters and statements to Buchberger. Buchberger complained, "The position of Neumann's father regarding Church power is in principle correct, but in practice utter hostility."[20] Nonetheless, the Konnersreuth Circle's respect for some elements of Church authority as well as their numerous prominent supporters, including Cardinal Michael Faulhaber of Munich, meant that their undefined status as neither endorsed nor condemned lasted indefinitely.

The Bavarian Bishops' decree and Nazi restrictions on the press led to several years of public silence regarding Konnersreuth, which loosened from 1936 to 1938 with the publication of a book by Armenian-Catholic Archbishop Josef Teodorowicz of Lviv that argued in favor of Neumann's validity on a medical and theological basis. This book prompted a response by the leader of a Rhineland circle of Catholic doctors opposed to the Konnersreuth Circle, Dr. Josef Deutsch. Close to death, which the Konnersreuth Circle suggested came as punishment from God, Deutsch argued that Therese Neumann humiliated Catholic doctors and scientists and threatened the Church with shame should she ever be revealed as a

fraud. Deutsch critiqued Buchberger for not going further with his quest for a medical investigation.[21] The pressure of renewed debate initiated fresh efforts by the Church for an examination. Buchberger complained, "There are many genuinely Catholic men, priests, and doctors who do not believe in the alleged fasting."[22] The repeated refusal of the Neumann family led to a more strongly worded statement by the Bavarian Bishops in 1937. This new proclamation absolved the Church of any responsibility for what transpired in Konnersreuth. Frustrated with years of perceived disobedience, Buchberger created as much separation between his diocese and Konnersreuth as possible on the eve of the Second World War. Unable and perhaps unwilling to excommunicate the Neumann family due to their persistent popularity and still powerful connections, Buchberger dealt what seemed to be a serious setback to Neumann's desire for official Church recognition.

As Therese Neumann and her supporters managed their relationship with the Catholic Church, they also confronted an unfriendly National Socialist state starting in 1933. Most of the literature about Neumann suggests that she and her circle resisted Nazism unconditionally. Indeed much evidence confirms an antagonism between the Konnersreuth Circle and the Third Reich. When one untangles the myths and evaluates reality, however, the situation appears more complicated and layered. On the one hand, Neumann and her followers acted against the state at several points to uphold Konnersreuth's status as an independent spiritual stronghold and in favor of a politically Catholic alternative to National Socialism. On the other hand, they reigned in much of their anti-Nazi sentiment to facilitate Neumann's freedom and sometimes even utilized contacts in the NSDAP to resolve disputes.

The persecution of writers and journalists in favor of Neumann constitutes the greatest testament to anti-Nazism within the Konnersreuth Circle. Besides the martyrdom of Fritz Gerlich, Lama died in prison, where he was either strangled or hanged in 1941 after years of harassment by the Gestapo. Johannes Maria Verwyen, a Catholic convert who wrote theological and psychological defenses of Neumann, died of typhus in Sachsenhausen in 1943. Furthermore, Gerlich's closest collaborators on *Der gerade Weg*, Capuchin Father Ingbert Naab and Prince Alois Erich von Waldburg-Zeil endured death threats and house searches by the Gestapo. Eichstätt Professor Franz Xaver Wutz suffered imprisonment as did Erwein Baron von Aretin, Bruno Grabinski, and Johannes Maria Höcht. The Nazis briefly detained two of Neumann's brothers, Hans and Ferdinand, as well as her father for aiding Catholic dissidents escaping to Switzerland and admitting French POWs to their home.[23] Most impressively, Neumann's sister Ottilie hid a man of Jewish heritage who converted to Catholicism toward the end of the Second World War II.[24] The most prominent writers of Neumann's circle experienced grave

consequences for dissenting against the regime. Faith in Neumann's miracles did not lead directly to most of their travails, but it is more than a coincidence that so many of her associates became Gestapo targets for political opposition.

Within Konnersreuth, Neumann and her family remained loyal to the BVP both before and after its dissolution. In July of 1932, neighbors of the Neumanns tore down NSDAP campaign posters and attacked two SA members who displayed them. When the local gendarme came to discipline the assailants, Therese Neumann came outside to defend them. Shortly after the Nazis gained power, Neumann reportedly refused to see pilgrims who frequented hotels or taverns owned by members of the NSDAP. For these reasons as well as the association with *Der gerade Weg*, local authorities searched the Neumann house on June 26, 1933, for BVP material. While they found nothing incriminating, the local gendarme accused Neumann and her father of verbal abuse.[25] After the murder of Gerlich, the regional government reported unrest in Konnersreuth.[26] Many residents overheard Therese Neumann complain about his murder in the weekly town market.[27] This attitude persisted to the struggles over the display of crosses in schools. When a teacher sympathetic to the regime removed a large cross from a classroom wall, Father Naber preached against the action in the pulpit, and Ferdinand Neumann led a procession of seventy-eight residents to the teacher's home to retrieve it despite orders by the local gendarme to clear the street.[28] The politics of the family and town, reinforced by Neumann's spiritual authority, caused consistent skirmishes with the one-party state.

Although these acts of dissent clearly occurred, just as many exaggerated accounts of Konnersreuth resistance circulated without documentary support. The rumors began during the Third Reich with claims that Neumann predicted the outbreak of war as early as 1933 or the fall of the regime during the Second World War.[29] Many legends emerged after the war as well. For example, an American GI maintained that the Gestapo came to arrest Neumann and fled in terror after she answered the door with blood pouring from her eyes.[30] Another postwar rumor professed that when a man visited Neumann during her "Friday suffering" with a picture of Adolf Hitler in his pocket, she took it screaming, "Smoke and Fire from Hell."[31] Such stories are utilized to support her case for beatification, but most seem detached from historical documentation currently available to researchers.

Numerous acts also suggest a willingness by Therese Neumann to cooperate with the Third Reich. She often diffused rumors about disruptive behavior herself. For example, when Catholic journalists from Vienna called her home to see if stories about her forced emigration to Switzerland or imprisonment were true, she and her father both reassured them that she remained safe in her bed. One of her advocates published an article in 1935

arguing that it was not only untrue but libelous against the national pride of Germany for foreign journalists to falsely claim that the NSDAP sent Neumann to a concentration camp.[32] In 1938 she traveled to the local gendarme to deny several rumors, including some that she predicted war and planned to flee the country. She said, "None of these assertions are true. I do not have the gift of prophecy. I am also well aware that such statements could be punishable. For these reasons I would disregard such nonsensical talk."[33] Such actions indicate a clear unwillingness by Therese Neumann to put herself at risk of incarceration. She previously made numerous prophetic statements about Church figures, opponents, and people's everyday lives prior to the Third Reich. She downplayed her clairvoyant power and disorderly potential out of a desire to survive in the Nazi state.

In an effort to endure the regime, the Konnersreuth Circle also used contacts within the NSDAP to protect Therese from potential persecution. The gendarme who searched her house in 1933 complained that Father Franz Xaver Wutz reached out to a member of the SA to conspire against him. Interestingly, the gendarme, who admitted he had lost the confidence of the local population, received a transfer away from Konnersreuth. Furthermore, Wutz used contacts within the party to obtain his own release from prison.[34] A report from one of Neumann's most outspoken opponents, Father Norbert Brühl, asserted that in local quarrels over Neumann's authenticity Father Naber and young Ferdinand Neumann also used contacts in the Gestapo to frighten skeptics from speaking out.[35] Such evidence indicates the complex nature of life under Nazism. Even a group with numerous outspoken opponents based on past connections to the BVP and faith in Neumann's miracles sought out friends within the regime to protect themselves and settle personal disputes in their favor. The occult proved powerful enough to capture the regime's attention, but Neumann recognized her limits in a politically violent environment where numerous friends had perished.

The Konnersreuth Circle also possessed a mixed record regarding Germany's Jewish population. It welcomed and even protected Jews who had converted to Catholicism. One of Neumann's closest friends included Bruno Rothschild, a man ostracized by his Jewish family for becoming a priest. Neumann also purportedly served as godmother to a convert from Judaism on a trip to visit the Bishop of Speyer. Nonetheless, traces of anti-Semitism typical of the Catholic Church prior to the 1960s exist in the records of the Konnersreuth Circle. For example, when Gerlich asked Neumann in late 1932 whether he should collaborate with the *Centralverein Deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (Central association for German citizens of Jewish faith) in Munich, she answered, "Be Careful. I do not like it." Furthermore, the paper's financier, Fürst Erich von Waldburg-Ziel, complained bitterly about the probable and unwanted influence of "German Jewry" at the Dresdener Bank when he faced a

troubling fiscal issue.[36] Finally, a document from the immediate aftermath of the war suggests a less than enlightened view on Europe's devastated Jewish population. Neumann critic Johann Baptist Westermayr received a letter from an in-law of Therese Neumann reporting a 1947 vision where she foresaw the rise of an anti-Christ in the 1950s who would be the son of a "Jewess." While it remains unclear whether Neumann actually had this vision, it illustrates the attitudes of some in her following.[37] None of this evidence indicates an alignment between the Konnersreuth Circle and the Third Reich on racist anti-Semitism. Rather, these examples suggest that anti-Judaism was present in numerous parts of Catholic Germany, as depicted by historians, such as Saul Friedländer.[38] This mentality prevented protest or discomfort with Nazi Jewish policy when it dealt with anyone other than Catholic converts and contributed to the silence about the Holocaust in the thousands of pages of material about the Konnersreuth miracles.

The data analyzed above indicate that the supernatural only partially shaped the ambiguous relationship of the Konnersreuth Circle to the National Socialist state, which was typical of Catholic Germans who felt uneasy under the regime. Examples of tragic martyrdom, open dissidence, and subtle dissent exist alongside cooperation for survival, collaboration in the name of power, and disinterest in some of the worst crimes of the regime on the Eastern Front, where one of Therese's brothers served in the *Wehrmacht*. Pre-Nazi attachments to the BVP and the political milieu of Konnersreuth drove the resistant acts as much as did faith in Neumann's miracles. Although Neumann's stigmata clearly inspired Gerlich's most prominent efforts against Nazism, many of the regime's other victims suffered as much for political attitudes as for anything else—political attitudes that might have landed them in the crosshairs of the regime even without a link to Konnersreuth. Efforts at cooperation, however, seemed motivated more by the desire of the Neumann family and their supporters to preserve Therese's safety and authenticity. Her body itself contained the sanctity worshipped by her followers, and with it great cultural and religious capital for her region. Therefore, the acts of passivity and even collaboration seem intimately related to the Catholic mysticism of the circle. In sum, an amalgamation of the occult and political Catholicism generated Konnersreuth's many acts of disobedience, but faith in the supernatural character of Therese Neumann's physical presence and a fervent aspiration to preserve it produced the most prominent acts of cooperation with Nazism.

IV

The reaction of the NSDAP to Therese Neumann contained equal amounts of suspicion, antagonism, fascination, and even fear. The

confluence of Neumann's "Friday suffering," grassroots support in rural Bavaria, international following, and connections to the BVP opened Konnersreuth to surveillance at a local and national level in the party. Local officials disagreed about the extent of Neumann's threat to the state, while one member of the SS, Dr. Eduard Aigner, took a special interest in her case. Disputed accounts of Konnersreuth's "liberation" by the United States military make the ultimate intentions of the party for Neumann difficult to assess, but the widespread faith in her sanctity within Germany and the international community curbed any desire to eliminate or imprison the Bavarian visionary.

Maria Anna Zumholz's book about apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Heede illustrates the negative attitude Nazism possessed toward the Catholic supernatural. Zumholz argues that the party viewed these popular religious traditions as threats to their desired totalitarian power over everyday life; competition for loyalty to National Socialist organizations and doctrine; and potential sources for dissidence. She notes how party members, such as Heinrich Himmler, sought the widespread replacement of Catholic mysticism with an equally paranormal belief in the miracles of Nazi racism and the fated rule of Adolf Hitler.[39] These differentiated attitudes contributed to the regime's initially heavy-handed reaction to the visions of four Catholic girls in Heede. They forced the girls to undergo medical and psychiatric exams and banned all pilgrimages to Heede, which attracted as many as twenty thousand Catholics from all over Germany in a single day.[40] Although a fear of upsetting the Catholic population motivated a Gestapo retreat in Heede, the case illustrates the fundamental suspicion of Catholic mysticism by the regime.

Many national and regional leaders within the party expressed reservations about Catholic miracles. Anticlerical leaders, such as Alfred Rosenberg and Gunter d'Alquen, used the press to cast doubt on the events of Konnersreuth. The *Völkischen Beobachter* (People's observer) already challenged Neumann's stigmata in 1927, although the rhetoric of these articles paled in comparison to the far more sarcastic Communist press. Multiple speeches, reports, and other documents from the Propaganda Ministry and the Ministry for Church Matters suggested that Catholic folk religion (*Volksfrömmigkeit*) "poisoned the *Volksseele* [soul of the people]" and "endangered the National Socialist worldview."[41] This concern with Neumann's alleged supernatural abilities led to discomfort with her potential for dissent. The regional government viewed the "character" of the Konnersreuth area to be more uncooperative on issues, such as the crucifix in schools, public processions, and the introduction of *Gemeinschaftschulen* (common schools) because of Neumann's authority.[42]

Despite these numerous examples of antagonism with Konnersreuth, other evidence suggests a willingness by the party to ignore Neumann out of either indifference or deference. A document from the German

Worker's Front argued that Therese Neumann had faded into the past. After the bishops' statement of 1937, detaching themselves from her case, the document argued that "the small, farming region fell once again into the realm of the forgotten."[43] Franciscan Georg Wunderle, an outspoken Neumann critic, interpreted the National Socialist stance as one of caution regarding the stigmatic. Unlike the German Worker's Front, he felt that her local celebrity worried the regime enough to leave her alone in order to preserve stability in the population. Finally, some popular literature on Konnersreuth suggests Adolf Hitler became obsessed with Therese Neumann, fearing her supernatural power, requesting updates on her activities, and demanding that she be left in peace.[44] This speculation lacks documentary support, but the rumors themselves indicate that at least some leaders of the party pursued caution in relations with Therese Neumann herself, if not the entire Konnersreuth Circle.

The Konnerrseuth *Gendarmeriehauptwachtmeister* (police constable), A. Raml, a member of the NSDAP and a Catholic, became embroiled in an intense personal and political feud in Konnersreuth. Although Konnersreuth Circle member Franz Wutz utilized contacts to help Raml's son pursue a career within the Church as a missionary, relations soured over the national election on July 31, 1932. After the Nazi rise to power, Raml searched the Neumann home, clashed with Neumann's father over international visitors, and wrote several reports depicting the Konnersreuth Circle's alignment with the BVP as problematic for the state. Raml viewed Neumann as troublesome not only for her linkage to the occult but also because of her family's loyalty to political Catholicism. Her supernatural power became important mainly in her ability to ostracize Raml locally, because so many residents respected and even feared her spiritual might, eventually forcing his transfer.[45] Two local teachers, who belonged to the NSDAP and opposed Neumann's authenticity, also viewed Konnersreuth through the lens of political Catholicism. They complained about the low participation in the Hitler Youth and how members of the *Jungvolk* (German youth) refused the Hitler greeting, and linked this behavior to Father Naber, whose spiritual partnership with Neumann was intimate.[46]

Raml's superiors and his successor, however, viewed Neumann differently. They wrote less critical reports and suggested that Raml's unstable personality contributed to his problems as much as the Neumann family's attitude. Although concerned with the outlook of a few Konnersreuth pilgrims, they emphasized some of Therese Neumann's more passive actions. After visiting Neumann, one of them described her as "having her feet on the ground" and "much too clever to become involved in hopeless political conspiracies, such as atrocity reports or other unsavory things."[47] Despite such sentiments, the historical commission for Therese Neumann's beatification found a note in her prayer book about

awaking one morning at 6:30 a.m. to two gendarmes searching her room in 1939.[48] This tension between treating Therese Neumann as both nonthreatening and a potential traitor supports the notion of her as a disruptive force whose power possessed severe limitations. Her popularity, politics, and formidable contacts, all grounded in her unmediated access to heavenly figures, made her a genuine threat to a dictatorial and controlling state. However, her desire to survive and her circle's wish to protect her sacred body led to a generally passive approach to the state. As long as she chose not to violate certain restrictions, state authorities tolerated her influence for the sake of public order.

V

The relationship of SS member and neurologist Dr. Eduard Aigner to Therese Neumann indicates many of the complications in the Nazi approach to the Catholic supernatural. Aigner's concern with Catholic miracles predated the First World War. As a leading member of the *Deutscher Monistenbund* (German Monist League), he published several essays attacking Germans who claimed cures at the Lourdes shrine from 1908 to 1910. As a monist promoting modern science and materialism in lectures famous throughout Europe, he opposed Church dogma and the "medieval superstitions" of Catholicism.[49] Aigner developed what one could only call an obsession with Therese Neumann that lasted over a decade. Upon his first visit to Konnersreuth in 1927, he gained a personal audience with Neumann and also observed her "Friday suffering" for hours. When he returned in 1928, Neumann's father did not allow his entrance after discovering his past attitude toward Lourdes. This ban from the Neumann home did not prevent Aigner from staying in town for two weeks and visiting three more times before 1944. His decision to live in Konnersreuth for weeks at a time without any hope of contact with Therese Neumann indicated the passion with which he followed a stigmata he believed to be real but in no way religious.[50]

Aigner created much publicity in 1938 with the publication of two articles about Therese Neumann in *Das Schwarze Korps* (the black corps) and a book that summarized much of what he included in lectures delivered throughout the country.[51] In a sometimes sober and objective description of the Konnersreuth miracles and the debate over their genuineness, Aigner argued that neither the bleeding nor the fasting of Neumann were falsified. However, he contended that they also possessed neither a Catholic nor Christian message. Rather, Therese Neumann's physical condition represented a scientific phenomenon with materialist explanations. Aigner agitated for a comprehensive medical exam of Neumann so the German *Volk* (race) and state could benefit from its potential scientific discoveries. Aigner suggested that in the name

of "public hygiene" and "*Volksgesundheit*" (people's health), the state should coerce the Neumann family into permitting an exam.[52] According to Fürst Erich von Waldbug-Zeil, he appealed personally to Heinrich Himmler for an intervention in the matter.[53]

Although Aigner coordinated his messages with one of Neumann's most vocal Church critics, Dr. Josef Deutsch, he found himself in conflict with most of her Catholic detractors. George Wunderle warned Regensburg of Aigner's attempt to make Therese Neumann a state matter when he believed her case to be strictly of concern to the Church.[54] Aigner in fact attacked the bishops for not insisting enough on an exam: "The police have taken sharp action against the exhibition of birth defects and human abnormalities at festivals and fairs. With Therese Neumann there is always an exception: here the Roman priests have taken the role of booth owner and rake in their Therese money." In an era of forced sterilizations and even euthanasia of those deemed disabled, both the Church and the Konnersreuth Circle feared the sort of institutionalization sought by Aigner. Leaning on rhetoric from the eugenics movement, Aigner genuinely believed such a step would yield beneficial scientific discovery and worried Neumann would die before doctors conducted comprehensive exams. He believed that Neumann's bloody tears likely resulted from autosuggestion and that it would be "physiologically" valuable to better understand the process.[55]

Simultaneously fascinated and disturbed by Catholic stigmata, Aigner represented the muddled Nazi viewpoint regarding religious miracles. He and many within the party passionately opposed what they viewed as old superstition within the Church and promoted instead a modern rationalism mixed with social Darwinist pseudoscience. Nonetheless, Neumann's exceptional experiences resonated with a National Socialist desire to understand seemingly irrational phenomenon in the framework of ideas such as parapsychology and monism. When delving beneath the surface of Aigner's rationalism, one glimpses a place for the occult in the Nazi worldview. The failure of the Third Reich to act on Aigner's suggestion also further illustrates Therese Neumann's tenuous position between potential threat and passive bystander. Unlike the seers of Heede, the Gestapo never actually forced a Konnersreuth exam. As long as Neumann contained her extraordinary visions and bleeding within the private and local sphere, the state allowed her personal freedom. The conciliatory side of the Neumann household emerged once again in 1944 when Father Naber brought Aigner into the Neumann home for a personal audience after sixteen years of hostility.[56] Although the reasons behind this decision remain unclear, one might speculate that Neumann thought a home visit would whet Aigner's appetite enough to curb his activism for her hospitalization.

Conflicting accounts of Konnersreuth's final day under the Third Reich only deepen the uncertainty of Nazi attitudes toward Therese Neumann. On

April 20, 1945, much of Konnersreuth burned and Neumann herself barely escaped her smoldering underground shelter. The cause of this destruction remains in dispute. One story claims that a reserve battalion with a company of POWs rested in Konnersreuth on the way from Thuringia to Bavaria, provoking an American attack and the damage to the town. Members of the Konnersreuth Circle, however, maintain that an SS attempt to murder Neumann before Konnersreuth's liberation by the Americans caused the battle. They contend that the SS aimed artillery fire at the Neumann house and then drew American fire on the town as well. This latter account is partially supported by an American journalist, Max Jordan, who became a devotee of Neumann and interviewed members of the town in the days that followed. If this SS unit actually attempted to murder Neumann, it would suggest that the state's caution regarding her well-being was only to keep rural Bavaria settled during the war. The opposing stories of the war's end indicate the limited gaze of the historian and the constraints to speaking authoritatively about matters concerning Therese Neumann.[57]

VI

After the Second World War, Therese Neumann emerged from the isolation of the Third Reich. A new wave of miracles, both religious and otherwise, that expressed anxiety of a war-torn population faced with yet another tumultuous political change enhanced her relevancy. In an era where the Bavarian town of Heroldsbach attracted over a million pilgrims and faith healers like Bruno Gröning resonated throughout West Germany, Neumann's Good Friday visitors ranged from two thousand to twenty thousand between 1947 and 1961, and her home averaged fifteen thousand pilgrims a day when at her most popular.[58] Even her funeral in 1962 attracted seven thousand visitors, including the powerful CSU Minister Alois Hundhammer.[59] By surviving the Third Reich, Neumann cemented her legacy as a spiritual figure of enduring meaning.

Neumann built upon her existing following by appealing to fears of apocalypse and salvation in the aftermath of total war and at the dawn of the nuclear age.[60] The work of Johannes Maria Höcht, editor of the *Konnersreuther Lesebogen* (Konnersreuth bulletin), viewed the world wars and the potential for future nuclear conflict during the Cold War as punishment for sinners and saw Therese Neumann and other Marian apparitions as the last hope for salvation before the end of days. This pessimistic viewpoint sometimes critiqued the United States for its newfound military influence over Europe and its use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[61] The Konnersreuth Circle also expressed a more mainstream concern with consumerism, technology, and a perceived spirit of secular morality—a concern that converged with the rhetoric of many other Catholic groups. Her circle projected Neumann as a counterpoint

to the increasing urbanization and material success and perceived Americanization of the early Federal Republic. Images of rural simplicity posed a stark contrast to the changes stimulated by the economic miracle, construction of American bases, and emerging popular culture in large West German cities as well as much of the countryside.[62] Neumann represented German Catholic angst at the changing values during West Germany's stunning recovery from the war.

Despite echoing the German Catholic fears during this transition to Western integration and Cold War, Neumann simultaneously engaged the very foreign policy alignments and economic realities her circle resisted. For example, Neumann enjoyed a distinctive association with the American military. Approximately five hundred thousand American soldiers traveled to her remote village to view her "Friday suffering" during the 1940s and 1950s, attention which both Neumann and her family welcomed. The Konnersreuth Circle's anti-Nazi and anti-Communist credentials made Neumann an ideal symbol to overcome tensions in the German-American relationship and articulate the myth of a Christian *Abendland* (occident) protecting Western Europe from Eastern totalitarian Communism.[63] Neumann also combined this special American relationship with her spiritual legitimacy among German Catholics to materially benefit her family, her town, and her allies within the Church during the upswing of the West German economy. Neumann's religious appeal gained her the confidence of CSU politicians, such as Josef Müller, as well as American officials who used military equipment to assist the renovation of Konnersreuth's Church. Neumann also massaged her contacts among German elites and American officials to secure the financing of a monastery and convent in her hometown.[64] These projects highlight the religious entrepreneurship of Therese Neumann and her circle.

In sum, this essay illustrates the awkward tension created by a charismatic stigmatic living under a totalitarian dictatorship and a hierarchical Church. An object of fascination, disgust, and concern for Church and state, Therese Neumann and her circle balanced their political convictions, spirituality, and personal safety. Neumann's bloody exhibitions, ecstatic prophesies, visions of holy figures, and private spiritual council stimulated comfort and engagement from millions of Catholics and received the rapt attention of both Church and state under the Third Reich. Institutional powers from the diocese of Regensburg to the Bavarian Political Police felt threatened by Neumann's elusive celebrity and spiritual power. The same mixture of popular support, uneasy interest in the occult, and powerful advocates that undermined these authorities also ultimately protected Neumann from the worst of their wrath. Free of medical clinics, concentration camps, death, and excommunication, Therese Neumann emerged from the Third Reich with renewed popularity as a transnational figure of German-American cooperation at the start of the Cold War.

Notes

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[3] Morsey, *Fritz Gerlich*, 154–58, 165–66, 186–87, 212–15, 236–38.

[4] Morsey, *Fritz Gerlich*, 7–41; Christian Feldmann, *Wahn oder Wunder? Die Resl von Konnersreuth—wie sie wirklich war* (Regensburg: MZ Buchverlag, 2010), 82–94.

[5] Ulrike Wiethaus, "Bloody Bodies: Gender, Religion, and the State in Nazi Germany," *Studies in Spirituality* 12 (2002): 189–202; Thomas Breuer, *Verordneter Wandel? Der Widerstreit zwischen nationalsozialistischem Herrschaftsanspruch und traditionaler Lebenswelt im Erzbistum Bamberg* (Mainz: Mattias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1992).

[6] Maria Anna Zumholz, *Volksfrömmigkeit und katholisches Milieu: Marienerscheinungen in Heede 1937–1940 im Spannungsfeld von Volksfrömmigkeit, nationalsozialistischem Regime und kirchlicher Hierarchie* (Cloppenburg: Verlag Runge, 2004).

[7] Maria Anna Zumholz provided me access to selected copies made in 1993 in the collection about Therese Neumann located in the *Bischöfliche Zentralarchiv Regensburg* during a visit to the University of Vechta in 2013; Zumholz also provided me access to her voluminous copies from the *Nachlass* George Wunderle of the *Provinzarchiv der deutschen Augustiner*, Würzburg.

[8] *Die Seherin von Konnersreuth: Berichte über Therese Neumann*, *Separatabdruck aus dem Tagblatt* (separate publication from the daily newspaper), *Die Neue Zeitung* (Vienna, 1927), 35.

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[11] Josef Teodorowicz, *Mystical Phenomena in the Life of Theresa Neumann* (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1945), 107.

[12] Staatsarchiv Amberg (StaAm), Bezirksamt Tirschenreuth 4169, Gendarmeriestation Konnersreuth an das Bezirksamt Tirschenreuth, April 1, 1929.

[13] Historisches Archiv des Erzbistums Köln (AEK), Gen I 31.9: Therese Neumann in Konnersreuth, Verlag des *Konnersreuther-Sonntagsblatt* an Herr. J. Briegans, Waldsassen, February 11, 1928; Das Bischöfliche Ordinariat Regensburg an das hochw. Erzbischöfliche Ordinariat Köln.

[14] PdAW, Nachlass Georg Wunderle, "Aus dem Tagebuch eines Studierenden. Aufzeichnungen über Konnersreuth während eines sechswöchigen Aufenthaltes," July/August 1938.

[15] Friedrich Ritter von Lama, *Therese of Konnersreuth: A New Chronicle* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1935), 3–8, 143–232.

[16] Die bayerische Staatsbibliothek München (StaabiM), Nachlass Johann Baptist Westermayr Ana 338, Abschrift, Friedrich von Lama Brief, November 16, 1932.

[17] Bischöfliches Zentralarchiv Regensburg (BZR), Ordinariatsarchiv (OA), Bestand Therese Neumann (THN), no. 84, 14–18, "Beobachtungen und Eindrücke in Konnersreuth am 22. und 23. März 1928."

[18] Klaus Unterburger,"Schwarz und kirchentreu, arm und eingeschüchtert? Katholisches Milieu und Nationalsozialismus in der Oberpfalz," in *Grenzen des katholischen Milieus: Stabilität und Gefährdung katholischer Milieus in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik und der NS-Zeit*, ed. Joachim Kuropka (Münster: Aschendorff, 2013), 337–40.

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[21] Josef Teodorowicz, *Konnersreuth im Lichte der Mystik und Psychologie* (Salzburg: A Pustet, 1936); Josef Deutsch, *Ärztliche Kritik am Konnersreuth! Wunder oder Hysterie?* (Lippstadt: Selbstverlag, 1938); StaabiM, Nachlass Westermayr, Dr. Karl Schmeing (Berlin) an Norbert Brühl, April 7, 1943.

[22] BZR, OA Regensburg THN, no. 112, 22–24, Michael Buchberger an Michael Faulhaber, December 20, 1936.

[23] Zumholz, *Volksfrömmigkeit*, 433–36.

[24] Anni Spiegl, *The Life and Death of Therese Neumann of Konnersreuth* (Eichstatt: Carmelites of Regensburg, 2002), 23.

[25] StaAm, Bezirksamt Tirschenreuth 4169, Gendarmeriestation Konnersreuth an den Herrn Vorstand Bezirkamtes Tirschenreuth, July 1, 1933.

[26] "Halbmonatsbericht der Regierung (1. bis 15. Juli 1934)," in *Die kirchliche Lage in Bayern nach den Regierungspräsidentenberichten 1933–1943*, vol. 4, *Regierungsbezirk Niederbayern und Oberpfalz, 1933–1945*, ed. Walter Ziegler (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1973), 31.

[27] StaAm, Bezirksamt Tirschenreuth 4169, Gendarmeriestation Konnersreuth an die politische Polizei, July 25, 1934.

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[29] StaAm, Bezirksamt Tirschenreuth 4169, Gendarmeriestation Konnersreuth an den Vorstand des Bezirksamts Tirschenreuth, August 1, 1938.

[30] Adalbert Albert Vogl, *Therese Neumann: Mystic and Stigmatist, 1898–1962* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, 1987), 70.

[31] Vogl, *Therese Neumann*, 54.

[32] StaAm, Bezirksamt Tirschenreuth 4169, Gendarmeriestation Konnersreuth an das Bezirksamt Tirschenreuth, April 24, 1935, and "Konnersreuth in trüben Lichte," *Konnersreuther Sonntagsblatt*, March 17, 1935.

[33] StaAm, Bezirksamt Tirschenreuth 4169, Gendarmeriestation Konnersreuth an den Vorstand des Bezirksamts, August 4, 1938.

[34] StaAm, Bezirksamt Tirschenreuth 4169, Gendarmeriestation Konnersreuth an den Herrn Vorstand des Bezirksamtes Tirschenreuth, July 1, 1933; Zumholz, *Volksfrömmigkeit*, 435.

[35] StaabiM, Nachlass Westermayr, Zerwürfnisse in Konnersreuth Jahr 1943, Heinrich Muth an Norbert Brühl, August 27, 1943.

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[38] Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939–1945* (New York: Harper, 2006), 58.

[39] Zumholz, *Volksfrömmigkeit*, 440–43.

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[44] Feldmann, *Wahn oder Wunder?*, 90–91.

[45] StaAm, Der Vorstand des Bezirksamts Tirschenreuth an die Bayerische Politische Polizei, August 3, 1935.

[46] Feldmann, *Wahn oder Wunder?*, 88.

[47] StAm, Der Vorstand des Bezirksamts Tirschenreuth an die Bayerische Politische Polizei, August 3, 1935.

[48] Email from journalist/historian Toni Siegert, member of the historical commission for the beatification of Therese Neumann on September 28, 2013.

[49] Andreas Kotulla, *"Nach Lourdes!" Der französische Marienwallfahrtsort und die Katholiken im Deutschen Kaiserreich, 1871–1914* (Munich: M. Meidenbauer, 2006), 317–19; Eduard Aigner, *Die Wahrheit über eine Wunderheilung von Lourdes* (Frankfurt: Neue Frankfurter Verlag, 1908).

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Part III.
Legacies, 1945–Present

9: A Messiah after Hitler, and His Miracles: Bruno Gröning and Postwar Popular Apocalypticism

Monica Black

You could say it was an age of miracles. The years following the Second World War saw mysterious healings, divine visitations, and the veneration of saints. In America, Oral Roberts exorcised demons to cure the sick. In France, Italy, Germany, Poland, and Spain, the Virgin Mary appeared hundreds of times. Padre Pio and Therese Neumann received stigmata—and pilgrims from all over the world. Less sanctified, perhaps, but no more readily explicable, were the dozens of UFO sightings reported from Japan to New Mexico and beyond. And in 1949, for the first time since the history of weather began being systematically recorded, it snowed in Los Angeles, California.[1] In March that same year, rumors began circulating around Herford, a Westphalian city in what would soon become the Federal Republic of Germany, about a nine-year-old boy named Dieter Hülsmann, who suffered from muscular dystrophy. Dieter had lain in bed for some 10 weeks, his father later said, unable to stand or walk. Then, to his family's great and hopeful amazement, and assisted by an obscure wonderworker, Dieter had stood up and taken several hesitant steps.[2] This was immediately hailed as a miracle. As rumors of it spread out from Herford, the Hülsmann family villa at Wilhelmsplatz 7 was besieged with visitors, well-wishers, and cure-seekers, not to mention scores of the merely curious. Cars, trucks, even whole buses began lining the well-heeled neighborhood's streets, as ailing people streamed into town. Soon hundreds, then thousands were sleeping on benches in the train station or on the Hülsmanns' lawn, for days and nights at a time, in the cold and damp of spring.

With the cure-seekers came reporters, and with them stories of spontaneous healings began circulating far outside Herford, an ancient but otherwise ordinary city of some fifty thousand, known chiefly for the manufacture of sweets and furniture.[3] They called it the Miracle of Herford. Adults and children, whether in wheelchairs, mobile only on crutches, or indeed confined to bed for years, were suddenly standing

up and walking around. People with trouble speaking could talk without hesitation or constraint. Eyes dimmed by age or accident could see again. Pain endured for months or years vanished. Stiff and damaged limbs and fingers became supple. The deaf could hear.

At the center of this drama of healing, it turned out, was an eccentric figure named Bruno Gröning. At first almost nothing was known about him. Yet after a short treatment involving little more than speaking with Dieter and rubbing his legs, he had diagnosed the sources of the boy's trouble and helped Dieter walk.[4] Almost as astonishing, once a fuller picture began to take shape, were the healer's claims about himself, his power, God, nature, good and evil, health and sickness. These claims ranged from the grandiose to the quotidian. "I am here to let the people be healed," he said in Frankfurt in 1949.[5] Only God could heal the sick, and he, Gröning, was God's instrument on earth. "I have unleashed things you speak of as miracles," he said to one observer. "But they are not miracles, they are matters of fact. . . . The good in people has to drive out the bad. . . . Throw your suffering away."[6]

For a time, Gröning's name was on the lips of nearly everyone: politicians, city and regional officials, medical doctors, university professors, police investigators, lawyers, people in the street, members of the clergy and the press. His personality was assessed by various experts, including the psychoanalyst Alexander Mitscherlich. He appeared in the pages of *Der Spiegel* several times and once on its cover. He became the subject of a documentary film and attracted workers and aristocrats, men, women, and children, city and rural folk, as well as movie stars, government ministers and members of the Allied occupation administration.[7] Both Catholics and Protestants flocked to see him, alongside, as one contemporary put it, "Jews and Gypsies—the latter of whom have a particular fidelity to him."[8]

For his army of detractors, Gröning was a fraud, a charlatan, a dangerous lunatic, a sexual deviant. A graphologist named Ludewitz, having apparently studied Gröning's penmanship, denounced him as inspired by "purely egotistical motives that he believes he masks the way an actor might with a pious-naïve exterior." Gröning's faithful, or "victims," meanwhile, came "from the ranks of a certain weak-willed, credulous, [and] suggestible human type, from among the neurotics, hysterics, and others with imaginary illnesses."[9] How Ludewitz knew this without examining *their* handwriting remains unclear, but his diagnosis fit narratives prevalent since the nineteeth century concerning the dangers of suggestion.[10]

Yet for his acolytes, Gröning was nothing short of a messiah. They called him Miracle Doctor (*Wunderdoktor*), Miracle Healer (*Wunderheiler*), Miracle Worker (*Wundertäter*), Cure Bringer (*Heilspender*), even savior (*Heiland*). Though his media presence would ebb and flow over time, he

remained a subject equally of fascination and horror in the Federal Republic for years to come. His utterances and mass healings—where tens of thousands came together hoping to meet him—to say nothing of his legal battles, court appearances, bitter public disputes with some former disciples, and ultimately, his death in 1959—fed the press and tabloid outlets a steady diet of intrigue and mystery for the better part of a decade.

What did it mean that Gröning's cures were immediately heralded by so many—not only by his supplicants, their families, and various other witnesses, but also frequently in the press—as miracles? More pointedly, what did it mean to be a messiah after Hitler? In 1949, the latter was a dead and generally (though not by any means entirely) discredited dictator-prophet. Styled as a savior, that prophet had led Germany into a war motivated in no small measure by apocalyptic visions of purity, by an existential battle between good and evil, and by the promise of creating a new and (for the chosen few) utopian world. Hitler would frequently appear in the background of discussions of Gröning and of what it meant that thousands of people would wait in the rain for days just to have the chance to see him or speak with him for a moment.

There had certainly been mystical healers in German history before Gröning, not to mention traditions of faith cures (*Gesundbeten*) and healing through verbal charms (*Besprechen*).[11] Yet if it is true, as journalist Rudolf Olden wrote in the 1930s, reflecting on the career of the then-prominent spiritual healer Joseph Weißenberg, that miracles "are as much a product of history and environment as the ordinary and the banal," then historicity—that is, time and place—matters. Whether or not Gröning's was an age of wonders, it was a distinctly uneasy moment in German history. Following so closely on the experiences of Nazism, exterminatory war, and the Holocaust, and facing renewed threats from the escalating Cold War and the possibility of nuclear annihilation, the Gröning episode took on public proportions quite unmatched by those of any other healer figure in recent German history. This was not merely because that episode was fueled by a newly liberated and competitive press, word of mouth among Gröning's acolytes and critics, and what appeared to his armies of supporters to be his rather striking successes. The extraordinary reception of Gröning was connected to many things, but some part of it seems also to have been rooted in a longer history of popular apocalypticism and traditions of religious prophecy in Germany. Gröning, as it turns out, was in just the right place at just the right time, making his emergence and his works appear—to those inclined to look for it—to have been set in motion by the hand of God and imbued with much providential meaning.

* * *

When Germans imagined their deliverance after Hitler, what did they see? Did they envision a long-haired, slight yet athletic refugee and former Nazi Party member and POW with a prominent goiter and feverish eyes who spoke in mysterious formulas? Contemporaries writing about the Miracle Doctor obsessively described almost every aspect of his physical appearance—the shape and color of his eyes, the length of his hair, his gait, his facial expressions, his gestures, and his manner of speaking. A man who would for a time be a close associate of Gröning's, Egon Arthur Schmidt, described first meeting him in 1949. He was a "man with a powerful, somewhat compact form, . . . very simply clothed, . . . [with a] brown, weathered, heavily lined face, [and] long, wavy hair." In Gröning's features, Schmidt observed, fate had "dug its runes; this man must have walked through all the valleys. His countenance was completely open before me, without a beard, which gave him a strange, even mystical appearance. . . . His whole character breathed an extraordinary self-confidence rooted in a benevolent calm."[12] A doctor named Jens Bergfeldt wrote of a "great, perceptible source of power" that streamed from Gröning. Though he insisted that the healer did not look like a messiah (he wore "no white robe and no beard"), it was nonetheless beyond doubt that he "had magnetic powers."[13] The *Revue*, a popular illustrated newsweekly, compared Gröning's "dark-brown, rawboned face [to] the faces of Indian yogis." Was Gröning, *Revue* journalists mused, their far-flung descendent?[14] He had a penetrating gaze, people said, a haggard visage, and rough hands. He was lean, yet exuded vitality. One journalist referred to him as "gaunt and fever-eyed" and commented on his "short-fingered, unkempt hands."[15] Others spoke of his goiter or described the bright blue of his eyes; not a few portrayed him as "dark" or remarked on his long "oily" hair. He ate very little, they said, and slept less, but smoked endlessly and drank pot after pot of strong coffee. He liked animals especially and had some of his first successes healing them. He liked to be alone, in cemeteries or forests, and would spend hours contemplating blades of grass and developing friendships with squirrels and other small creatures.[16] Even when he was a child, people said, neighbors who took ill reported feeling better just having him stand nearby.[17] He had shown an uncanny ability to heal toothaches, his brother later recounted, simply by contemplating a hurting tooth.[18]

Simply put, Bruno Gröning was not quite of this world. Even West Germany's reflexively ironic and skeptical newsweekly, *Der Spiegel*, emphasized in its 1949 cover story on Gröning the healer's tendency to wear black, suggesting something cultish.[19] Yet being a holy man did not have to imply otherworldliness. Many descriptions praised Gröning's "simplicity," earthiness, and lack of formal knowledge and training. While some mocked his poor spoken German, others hailed his speech as merely unadorned and uncorrupted. Other observers, more matter-of-factly,

explained that he spoke "a strong West Prussian dialect."[20] As for himself, Gröning emphasized his artlessness and humility as part of his connection to God. "My power," he said in one interview,

> is not human but divine. I ask [those who come for healing] nothing about [their] religion or nation. People have to believe in God. I have been a poor man and want to stay a poor man, I want to lose everything but my power. . . . I am no miracle doctor, I am the little Gröning. I am neither learned nor educated.[21]

Similarly, in a discussion with the church superintendent of Herford, Pastor Hermann Kunst, Gröning said "that he had no sort of professional experience as a healer, and had never read a medical textbook. He took no form of instruction from human beings and read neither books nor newspapers. . . . His talent [he said] was entrusted to him by God."[22] Born in 1906 and brought up in a large, pious-Catholic, working-class family in the Danzig suburb of Oliva, Gröning was not conventionally religious, perhaps, but he was nonetheless a devout believer who consistently attributed his abilities to heal to God. He taught his followers that "the greatest doctor is the Lord God." Belief in God was a precondition of health, and illness was largely a problem of unbelief. He who suffered, Gröning believed, must do so until he found his way to God.[23] The earliest accounts of Gröning's cures were often strikingly unconcerned with "how" he made people well, because their authors assumed that his cures were miracles. As in Mark's gospel, the Miracle Doctor often simply commanded cure-seekers to take up their beds and walk. He took their canes or crutches away, saying to sufferers that they would no longer need them.[24]

Sometimes his supplicants were healed when Gröning was not even present. In the weeks following Dieter Hülsmann's astonishing walk, a man named Hein Müller came to Herford looking for Gröning, only to find him gone. Müller had raced motorcycles until 1929, when he was badly injured in an accident in Cologne. Suffering the effects of a spinal injury and nerve damage, and using a wheelchair since, according to one account, he experienced in Herford the effects of *Fernbehandlung*, or a "long-distance treatment," which enabled him suddenly to stand up and take several unsteady and difficult steps with his crutches.[25] When he later met Gröning for the first time in person, Müller ultimately walked a distance of sixteen meters.[26] In another instance, a soldier who had lost his speech when he was wounded during the First World War regained it after writing, but not even sending, a letter to Gröning.[27] The Miracle Doctor even healed over the telephone.[28] He himself claimed, and those cured by him attested to his ability to know, clairvoyantly or empathically, what they felt. What is more, both he and his closest associates would

declare, the healer could bestow upon *them* the power of his empathy, making them able to discern illness in others and ameliorate it through the power—he called it the *Heilstrom*, a "healing current"—that he transferred to them.[29]

Gröning's devotees unambiguously linked his appearance to the reign of Christ and could be heard to say, "Thy kingdom come," in gatherings around him.[30] Others had ecstatic experiences in those gatherings, sang hymns, and prayed aloud, "like we hear about from the Middle Ages," one doctor noted somewhat derisively.[31] After Herford officials banned Gröning, in highly bureaucratic language "from the continued exercise of [his] activities" in their city, a man wrote the city manager to say that "if Christ were on earth now, people would treat him just like Gröning."[32] "Those healed [by Gröning] and witnesses [to his spontaneous healings] . . . equate him with Christ," noted a medical doctor who published on topics related to mind–body medicine in the postwar years.[33] When after a certain point Gröning had effectively been banned from continuing his mission to heal altogether, a woman likened the ban to the "crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago." "Herr Bruno Gröning is the good son of God," she wrote.[34] What happened around Gröning, in other words, was not merely the curing of illness but an experience of such intense religious feeling that it could be dangerous. A young diabetic, Georg K., stopped taking his insulin because Gröning said that those "who had the proper belief in God" would be healed. K. became weak and fell into a deep coma. Though he was saved from death, he would continue to require a lot of care.[35]

In short: the Miracle Doctor was not only a man who reportedly cured a young child of a terrible and debilitating illness. He was a healer, a figure composed of various legends—whether about the purported magic of "Gypsies," "Oriental" traditions of healing, the lives of the saints and the wonders they worked, or bearded ascetics and shamans in flowing robes. Yet the oldest and deepest part of the meaning of the Gröning phenomenon surely lay in the gospels and traditions of Christian religious healing from Jesus of Nazareth to Lourdes and beyond. The image of Jesus the Healer was a foundational part of German culture, an ancient set of stories that could help explain the onset or continuation of illness or a sudden and mysterious return to health. Gröning's devotees often emphasized his apparent connection to children and a particular ability to cure blindness and lameness—two conditions that feature prominently in the gospels.[36] Being the very conditions that Jesus of Nazareth had cured, they carried with them two thousand years of narrative traditions and condensed meanings.[37] Each time someone around Gröning was healed, his community of believers lived out an ancient story with profound meaning, about the power of God to liberate and redeem the sick. Images published in some period newspapers and various pro-Gröning

pamphlets and books included photographs in which individuals in wheelchairs or on stretchers were depicted serially, first seated or lying down, often with careworn, exhausted expressions on their faces. In subsequent images, the same individual would be shown lifting herself or himself up and beginning to stand, or even struggling to walk, with a lighter, less troubled countenance.

* * *

To be sure, there were other ways of understanding the phenomena described above, and sudden healing in particular, just as there were many ways of understanding the concept of a messiah or a miracle. There had been a lively discussion within the medical profession in Germany during the First World War about the ability of some doctors to heal certain symptoms in soldiers suddenly, through sheer magnetism—that is, through their own personality as wonderworkers.[38] Michael Hau has described the "intuitive, synthetic gaze" deemed to be "the hallmark of outstanding physicians."[39] Though the idea of a doctor's charismatic curative power was being challenged precisely in the years in which Gröning appeared, that earlier discourse about sudden healing may have influenced how some perceived him.[40] Erwin Liek's exceedingly popular *Miracles in the Healing Arts* went through four editions between 1930 and 1951. For Liek, life itself was a miracle, a wonder: "The power that created the universe and set it in motion through ancient, mysterious laws . . . also devised the building plan and the operating instructions for bright, eternally changing, organic life." This power, in Liek's view, had historically gone by different names, but he declared, "Religion, the connection to the supernatural, miracles, Goethe's sacred enigma—these will remain, as long as there are humans on the earth."[41] Liek's holistic, and what we might call spiritually inflected approach to healing—one opposed to what proponents saw as an overly biologized and mechanist medicine—was a visible strand in popular and academic medical writing from the Wilhelmine era to the Nazi years and beyond.[42]

But how to understand Gröning's having been heralded by so many not only as a lowercase miracle worker, but as the "good son of God," an "Angel of the Lord," and even more mysteriously, the "Third Messiah"?[43] Where did this particular language come from, and what did it mean? Sketching out (however briefly) a modern history of popular religious apocalypticism and prophecy in Germany suggests that Gröning was not simply "another Hitler," as some critics suggested. That is, he was not just someone who seemed able to transfix a labile public with his gaze and his promises. Indeed, his appearance—like that of a comet or a falling star—might be said to belong to a longer tradition of watching and interpreting signs for glimpses of the hand of God in the world.

Work on chiliastic traditions of thought in modern Germany has mostly focused on intellectual history from the nationalist era to that of National Socialism and often almost categorically insisted on the secularism of prophetic traditions and apocalypticism.[44] A look at some of the ephemera of everyday life over the several decades before Gröning made his mark—rumors, newspaper stories, folklore—reveals something a bit different. One might characterize this something different as an apocalyptic sensibility—images, stories, characters, symbols, and motifs that could be engaged or reengaged as circumstances warranted. This sensibility was not at all unrelated to the "logic of the phantasmagoria" in the interwar years that Jon Ondrovcik describes in chapter 3 of this volume. The Gröning moment, too, reveals cultural recourse to a "system of intelligible signs and signals pointing off toward some unity of experience and comprehension." Many such signs and signals—like Gröning himself, his arrival, even his physical appearance—seemed to point toward the end times, a final, slate clearing catastrophe, or some great redemption.

It would be difficult to pinpoint the origins of apocalyptic sensibilities in modern Germany, but certainly the experiences of the era of the World Wars shaped them dramatically. The decades before the First World War already saw a flourishing of religious movements outside the conventional Protestant–Catholic confessional divide, some of which took special inspiration from the Book of Revelation, declaring in their publications that "we are living in the last days."[45] Between the 1890s and the 1920s, these groups came to represent a genuine mass movement—in Berlin alone, New Apostolic communities, only one of several types of chiliastic new religious groups, claimed some twenty thousand adherents.[46] While the initial eschatological fervor of such groups had begun to ebb away before 1914, it came roaring back with the start of the First World War.[47] A veritable army of popular fortune-tellers, diviners, and publicists appeared, whose predictions for the outcome of the war sometimes built on old stories and earlier foretellings—some dating to the Napoleonic era and even earlier. The prophecies of such legendary figures as the "Forest Seer" (*Waldprophet*)—an amalgamation of (at least) two other staples of folkloric-visionary discourse in Germany, Matthias Stormberger (ca. 1745–1850) and Mühlhiasl (Mathias Lang, b. 1753), found new audiences.[48] Their prophecies, now recycled for new purposes, told of a world turned upside down (women wearing trousers and cutting their hair) and of widespread doom and destruction (and the possibility of renewal). They included, in other words, the dualistic motifs that have often structured apocalyptic literature—binaries of good and evil, righteous and damned, pure and foul, annihilation and rebirth.[49] War verse was another place where apocalyptic motifs surfaced with great regularity. Penned largely by men and women of the educated classes, this poetry commanded a large reading public.[50] Theology, less surprisingly, was yet another source.[51]

Infusing society at many different levels, apocalypticism became a staple of culture and of some strands of religious discourse—not to mention German war propaganda.[52] Having conceived of Germany as God's very agent on earth in the war may have made the defeat of the German army in 1918 even more bewildering for many people. As defeat was followed by revolution and the tumultuous events of the 1920s and 30s—some Germans of an eschatological outlook were only confirmed in their view that the end of days were upon them: "If Germany before November 1918 had been a 'Christian state,' afterward it looked to many people like a godless republic."[53] The onset of the Great Depression brought "barefoot prophets" and "inflation holy men" to the streets; many became famous in that era, preaching the end times and styling themselves as redeemers.[54]

Hitler was, in a sense, one of them. Not a few people in Germany would come to see his rise and the coming of the Third Reich as veritable signs that history was moving not meaninglessly or randomly, but with all the purpose of destiny and divine grace. When Nazi supporters themselves referred, as they sometimes did, to a Thousand-Year Reich, they not only gave themselves a name with deep biblical overtones and the power of magic numbers but also predicted the future. Hitler "read himself into" the Book of Revelation, "as one divinely chosen to initiate . . . the Third Reich," suggesting not only Germany's historical third empire but also "Christ's thousand-year kingdom on earth."[55] Chiliasm was a basic structure of thought for some Nazi leaders and their supporters. In their version of history, Hitler figured as a redeemer who would save the German nation and lead a godly realm to an ultimate triumph over evil, light over darkness.[56]

This sensibility would, in some measure, also motivate Nazi war. The war's propagandists claimed the German nation was fighting for its very existence against "Jewish-Bolshevism" and to resist enslavement by "Jewish plutocracy."[57] Yet the Second World War was conceived in not only starkly existential but also religious terms. Traditions of religious anti-Semitism were "a necessary condition" for the success of anti-Jewish Nazi propaganda.[58] This was not an atavistic anti-Semitism; it was something new. Nazi anti-Jewish apocalypticism and the genocide that grew out of it were about clearing the slate of time, reestablishing and purifying origins, rewriting history to suit a revolutionary, millennial age. This "redemption," as transgressive as it was, was specifically Christian.[59]

By the war's end, all manner of apocalyptic scenarios agitated Germany. Some predicted that Germans would be wiped out if the war was lost, and called for "fanatical resistance."[60] Postwar evidence also suggests that passages from the Book of Revelation, favored by its share of oracles in history, circulated throughout Germany—especially chapter 13, verse 18: "This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding

calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six-hundred sixty-six."[61] Artist Otto Pankok was not the only person in Germany who was inclined to explore the numerological terms of Revelation and find—as he did in a 1945 typescript—that Hitler's name spelled 666. Later, Pankok would also create a woodcut representing Hitler—once exalted as a messiah—as the Beast.[62]

In the chaos of the Nazi state's defeat, rumors and nightmarish visions of all kinds circulated across German-speaking Europe.[63] Earlier prophecies and folk legends and the varied flotsam of collective memory—like the predictions attributed to the Forest Seer, the Bohemian Forest Prophet, and Mühlhiasl—were recovered, reexamined for new meaning, and embroidered with new motifs and pieces of lore borrowed from various printed sources and passed around by word of mouth. The prophecies of Sibylla Weiss, whom folklore held to have been a witch who had foretold centuries before not only the war's end but also the postwar expulsions of German populations from Bohemia and other regions, resurfaced. Her visions, as recounted by German expellees, anticipated yet another war—one that would be "the worst of all," leave no stone standing on another, and yet last no longer than a snowfall. In a deck-clearing, end-of-days mode, these prophecies often concluded by imagining the expellees returning safely to their Bohemian or Silesian villages (from which those who had expelled them had all, to a person, mysteriously vanished).[64]

But in spring 1949, a special class of quite specific prophecies—about the imminent end of the world—began to surface. They soon reached such a pitch of intensity that they attracted the attention of scholar of prehistory Alfred Dieck. Dieck, who had made his name investigating bog bodies—the remains of mostly Iron Age people preserved in the moorlands of northern Europe—now turned his hand to investigating rumors that had surfaced in the region around Hannover, in cities like Duderstadt, Göttingen, Braunschweig, Hamlen, and Bielefeld, among others. Dieck showed how the prophecies, which originated in oral culture, quickly made their way into newspapers. Under headlines like "Apocalypse!," "On March 17 the World Will End!," and "Families Want to Be Together for the End of the World!" quite reputable newspapers presented—as jokes or canards—stories about impending apocalypse.[65] How these stories were perceived by a public primed to expect the worst by much recent and bewildering experience—was another thing entirely. As Dieck was able to show, newspaper stories about the coming end of days were read and added to and otherwise transformed before resurfacing—again, in new forms—in oral culture.

Dieck's theory was that the powerful belief formerly invested in Hitler and his authority had been transferred in 1945 to an army of astrologists, palm readers, and seers, who had emerged, as in 1918, to

fill the breach in knowledge that opened up when the world, as people had known it, collapsed. The Allies, rather than filling that breach, had themselves come to appear treacherous and untrustworthy, Dieck argued: while Germans were subject to hunger rations, the Allies prohibited trade with countries with surplus foodstuffs. Their policy of "industrial disarmament," which continued well into the 1950s, was perceived by many people as having harmful effects on jobs and the German economy. These facts, combined with unsettling stories about tensions at the East–West border, the dissemination of what Dieck saw as scurrilous American popular culture that diminished Germans' "reverence for the majesty of life and death," and a sensationalist press had helped produce increasingly bleak views of the future.[66] Meanwhile, "constructive political news in the press and on the radio" went unheard.[67] Then, just around the end of February 1949, Dieck claimed that the rumors that the world would end soon became more insistent, more anxious. The date commonly said to be marked out for the end—somewhere around mid-March—fluctuated. As the time drew nigh, however, Northwest German Broadcasting (NWDR) in Hamburg, presumably poking fun at the rumors, broadcasted a "catastrophe play" in which the world was threatened by an enormous meteor shower.[68]

* * *

It was in just that moment and in that place (Herford lay within the scope of Dieck's study) that Gröning appeared. He had been curing people for some time, years even, without attracting much attention, apparently, from anyone. Why was this moment in Herford so different? Perhaps the tendency to tease out of the chaos of events some ultimate sense in history, coming on the heels of a series of terrifying rumors about the end of the world, holds some clue. Perhaps some people were simply *waiting*, in effect, for Gröning—or someone like him—to appear. When he then, speaking in the name of God, cured a young boy of a terrible illness that made him unable to walk (it was rumored), when he (it was said) told the boy simply to "go outside and play"—and the boy did that (legend had it)—Gröning affirmed an image of the healer as anointed one, an image embedded in a long history of spiritual medicine dating at least as far back as Jesus's time. For those prepared to see things this way, Gröning's miraculous cures confirmed that he was the anointed one—and being the anointed one confirmed the reality of his miracles. That he was also said to have possessed other very specific gifts—clairvoyance, for instance, and, according to some, even the ability to raise the dead—only enhanced his status and further legitimated his claims to a divine connection. These gifts had long heralded, for millenarian groups, the return of the apostolic age.[69] Gröning also conformed to the sociology, if one will, of the

millenarian prophet: he was a modest person, with relatively little formal education; he claimed to heal through divine intervention and from a personal sense of duty to carry out God's will; he stood outside conventional religious structures.[70]

Having been banned from healing in Herford, and then all of North Rhine-Westphalia and then Hamburg as well, in late summer 1949, Gröning moved on to Munich. Crowds of hundreds and then thousands began forming spontaneously all over the city simply because there were rumors that he might show up. He ultimately took up residence at a country resort in Rosenheim, not far away, called the Traberhof. The crowds who came to meet him there swelled to such proportions that the Red Cross had to provide tents to shelter the supplicants who gathered in their tens of thousands; a nearby town laid straw in the market hall to provide beds for the cure-seekers. The atmosphere around Gröning at the Traberhof inspired further prophetic visions. "To me it seems that we are living at the end of time," preached a visiting Benedictine from Italy to the crowds in September.[71] Gröning himself seemed at this point to be a portent heralding the course of events, the meaning and fate of the universe, and tracing out "the cosmic horizon against which history is set."[72] A new version of Mühlhiasl's prognostications was now reprinted, in pamphlet form, in light of Gröning's appearance. Its publisher used the occasion to point to what he saw as the larger meaning of Gröning and the events at the Traberhof but also to link both to the longer history of popular apocalyptic prophecy in Germany. He appended to the pamphlet a quote attributed to Mühlhiasl: "The great preachers will arise and holy men will work wonders. The people will have their belief back and there will be a long, peaceful time."[73] Gröning became the sign confirming other signs—signs of redemption, renewed faith, and the possibility of miracles. One of Gröning's closest supporters and disciples shortly afterwards published a book on the healer called *The Great Transformation*. Gröning, it seemed to some, had initiated the new age.[74]

To be sure, and as some of the opinions described at the outset of this chapter would suggest, not everyone in Germany shared such views. Many regarded Gröning as at best a charlatan, at worst a terrifying emissary from a dark world of ignorance and "superstition"—or even a new Hitler. Representing a group called the Militant League against Nihilism, one man wrote to officials to denounce Gröning. "As a sincere German and Christian, I am duty-bound to help fight evil," he declared.[75] Obviously not all religious-minded Germans supported Gröning and not all religious-minded Germans shared a millenarian outlook. Even within millenarian circles, there were many who would not have been persuaded that Gröning was a messiah performing miracles assisted by divine power. Some clergy, both Protestant and Catholic, were quite alarmed by his message—that only the "good" deserved to be well. Others accused him

of using the "arts of the devil" and of being in league with "demonic forces" with which he intended "to perplex humanity."[76] Yet others took a very different stance, seeing the healer as their salvation and as Germany's path out of darkness. If all people would "turn themselves earnestly to Jesus," one man declared in a letter acclaiming Gröning, "we would all be better off, and the catastrophe (*Unheil*), that still hangs over us would be averted."[77]

* * *

If Gröning was a messiah, he was a messiah for a very different age. Elaine Pagels notes that while terrible human crises can produce end-time fantasies, they can also prompt spiritual breakthroughs, new alignments; crisis can prompt renewal, a return to God or to the good. "From the first century to the present," she writes, "certain people have told how, in crisis, they suddenly, unexpectedly, experience God's presence—or some presence—offering hope."[78] From the vantage point of 1949, Germans had lived through various moments that they not unreasonably viewed as cataclysmic. In the Third Reich, at least after a certain point, their government intentionally spread false rumors to divert attention from the increasingly doom-laden course of the war. Joseph Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry not only disseminated tales about revolutionary new "wonder weapons" but also sent typewritten prophecies, anonymously, through the mail suggesting that victory was imminent.[79] End-time scenarios bloomed as the state propagated terrifying visions of what defeat would look like. After the war, apocalyptic scenarios continued to flow through popular culture and were spread not only by word of mouth but by newspaper as well, suggesting that a free, postfascist press was not necessarily a responsible or even an informative one. In this mire of uncertainty, foreboding, and distrust, Gröning was, if not a messiah, then perhaps a figure of hope, whose wondrous therapeutic abilities, at least for some, verified his connection to God.

Notes

I extend my warmest thanks to Eric Kurlander, my coeditor, for his thoughtful and insightful criticisms of this essay in an earlier form, as well as to George Williamson. Great thanks, always, go to Matthew Gillis.

[1] Alexander C. T. Geppert and Till Kössler suggest that the twentieth century unleashed whole new "worlds of wonder," making it an "age of miracles *par excellence*." See Alexander C. T. Geppert and Till Kössler, eds., *Wunder: Poetik und Politik des Staunens im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011), 15. On Marian apparitions in various parts of Europe in the early Cold War moment, see Monique Scheer, "Catholic Piety in the Early Cold War Years, or: How the Virgin Mary

Protected the West from Communism," in *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies*, ed. Annette Vowinckel, Marcus M. Payk, and Thomas Lindenberger (New York: Berghahn, 2012), 129–51; on Mary in West Germany specifically, see Michael E. O'Sullivan, "West German Miracles: Catholic Mystics, Church Hierarchy, and Postwar Popular Culture," *Zeithistorische Forschungen / Studies in Contemporary History*, Online-Ausgabe 6 (2009), accessed November 26, 2013, http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/site/40208894/default.aspx. On Neumann's impact in postwar West Germany, see O'Sullivan's chapter in this volume; on Padre Pio, see Sergio Luzzatto, *Padre Pio: Miracles and Politics in a Secular Age*, trans. Frederika Randall (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010). On UFOs, see Greg Eghigan, "A Transatlantic Buzz: Flying Saucers, Extraterrestrials and America in Postwar Germany," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 12, no. 3 (2014): 282–303. On snow in Los Angeles: Nathan Masters, "Snow in the Basin: Documenting the Extremes of SoCal Weather," accessed November 29, 2013, http://www.kcet.org/updaily/socal_focus/history/snow-in-the-basin-documenting-the-extremes-of-socal-weather.html.

[2] Egon-Arthur Schmidt, *Die Wunderheilungen des Bruno Gröning* (Berlin: Falken Verlag Erich Sicker, 1949), 84–87.

[3] Archive of the Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene (hereafter: IGPP) /E 123/100. "Der Wundertäter von Herford," *Badisches Tagblatt*, no. 72, June 23, 1949.

[4] Schmidt, *Wunderheilungen*, 86.

[5] IGPP/20/16, Busam Photosammlung I, lfd. Nr. 001. Jobst Klinkmüller, "Bruno Gröning in Frankfurt," *Frankfurter Neue Presse*. Clipping undated, but likely published shortly after September 11, 1949.

[6] A. Kaul, *Das Wunder von Herford: Die merkwürdige Heilerfolge des Bruno Gröning* (Laudenbach: Lauda-Verlag, 1949), 13.

[7] Former chief of the information services division for the United States Military Government in Bavaria, James A. Clark, told a reporter, "One day a German friend brought Gröning to my house . . . I can't say that I felt better immediately but on the next day I was able to eat heartily for the first time in weeks and soon I will be well again." "Bavarian 'Healer' Attracts Germans," *New York Times*, September 8, 1949.

[8] Schmidt, *Wunderheilungen*, 29.

[9] Stadtarchiv Herford (hereafter: SH), S 10/270, "Wunderheiler" Bruno Gröning (Akten des Hauptamtes), 1949–1950, 51–52. Graphologisches Gutachten, Dipl.-Kfm. K. Th. Ludewitz, May 27, 1949.

[10] Anne Harrington, *The Cure Within: A History of Mind-Body Medicine* (New York: Norton, 2008), 57–66.

[11] Ulrich Linse, *Geisterseher und Wunderwirker: Heilssuche im Industriezeitalter* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1996), esp. 89–177; Robert Jütte, *Geschichte der alternativen Medizin: Von der Volksmedizin zu den unkonventionellen Therapien von heute* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1996), esp. 103–11; Michael Simon, *"Volksmedizin" im frühen 20. Jahrhundert: Zum Quellenwert des Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde* (Mainz: Gesellschaft f. Volkskunde in Rheinland-Pfalz, 2003).

[12] Schmidt, *Wunderheilungen*, 26–27.

[13] Jens Bergfeldt, *Herfords Wunderdoktor: Der Fall Gröning* (Wiedensahl und Minden: Heinz Schilling Verlag, n.d.), 1, 3.

[14] "Das Leben Bruno Grönings: Nach dem persönlichen Bericht des Seelenarztes," *Revue*, September 4, 1949, 11.

[15] IGPP/E 123/100. "Der Wundertäter von Herford," *Badisches Tagblatt*, no. 72, June 23, 1949.

[16] "Das Leben Bruno Grönings: Nach dem persönlichen Bericht des Seelenarztes," *Revue*, September 4, 1949, 11.

[17] "Das Leben Bruno Grönings: Nach dem persönlichen Bericht des Seelenarztes," *Revue*, September 4, 1949, 11.

[18] SH/E 348/10, Georg Gröning, "Manuskript für Druck und Verlag. Bruno Gröning," 8.

[19] "Wer ein Schnitzel findet, ist geheilt," *Der Spiegel*, July 7, 1949, 6–7.

[20] IGPP/20/16, Busam Photosammlung I, lfd. Nr. 001. Jobst Klinkmüller, "Bruno Gröning in Frankfurt," *Frankfurter Neuen Presse*, n.d. (presumably shortly after September 11, 1949).

[21] Staatsarchiv München (hereafter: StaM), Gesundheitsämter, 4256. Clipping from *Neue Miesbacher Anzeiger*, "Meine Kraft ist keine menschliche," September 10, 1949.

[22] SH/S 32/7, Medizinalpolizei/Heilkunde, 1945–54. Report from Superintendent des Kirchenkreises Herford (Pastor Kunst), May 1949.

[23] IGPP/E 123/100. "Der Wundertäter von Herford," *Badisches Tagblatt*, no. 72, June 23, 1949.

[24] Kaul, *Das Wunder*, 9.

[25] Kaul, *Das Wunder*, 8–9; Schmidt, *Wunderheilungen*, 51–53.

[26] Kaul, *Das Wunder*, 8–9.

[27] Kurt Trampler, *Die große Umkehr: Fragen um Bruno Gröning* (Seebruck am Chiemsee: Heering, 1950), 8.

[28] Trampler, *Die große Umkehr*, 28.

[29] Trampler, *Die große Umkehr*, 15.

[30] Trampler, *Die große Umkehr*, 92.

[31] Kurt Böhme, *Wunderheilungen: Lourdes—Gesundbeter—Gröning* (Berlin: Verlag Psyche, 1950), 15.

[32] SH S 32/7, Medizinalpolizei/Heilkunde, 1945–54. Herrn Bruno Gröning von Oberstadtdirektor, May 3, 1949; SH, S 10/270, "Wunderheiler" Bruno Gröning (Akten des Hauptamtes), 1949–50, 151, An den Oberstadtdirektor, June 26, 1949.

[33] StaM, Staatsanwaltschaften 3178a/3, 407. Dr. med. Wilhelm Beyer, Arzt, Sachverständigen-Gutachten über die Befähigung Bruno Grönings zum geistigen Heilen, July 22, 1957.

[34] StaM, Staatsanwaltschaften 3178a/3. Letter from Frau Hedwig Liebner, January 21, 1958.

[35] SH/S 32/7, Medizinalpolizei/Heilkunde, 1945–54. St. Marien-Hospital II, Hamm-Westfalen, betr. Georg K., June 21, 1949.

[36] On Gröning and children: Trampler, *Die große Umkehr*, 11. Recent scholarship has drawn attention to Jesus's "work as a charismatic performer" and reconceptualized him "as a shamanic figure." Amanda Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 28.

[37] Susanne Michl makes a similar point about wonderworker-doctors of the First World War era. See Michl, "'Gehe hin, dein Glaube hat dir geholfen': Kriegswunder und Heilversprechen in der Medizin des 20. Jahhunderts," in Geppert and Kössler, *Wunder*, 222.

[38] Michl, "Gehe hin."

[39] Michael Hau, "The Holistic Gaze in German Medicine, 1890–1930," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 74, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 497.

[40] Michl, "Gehe hin."

[41] Erwin Liek, *Das Wunder in der Heilkunde* (Stuttgart: Hippokrates Verlag Marquardt & Cie., 1951), 33–35.

[42] Anne Harrington, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Mitchell G. Ash, *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture, 1890–1967: Holism and the Quest for Objectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Christopher Lawrence and George Weisz, eds., *Greater than the Parts: Holism in Biomedicine, 1920–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[43] "Angel of the Lord": SH S 10/270, "Wunderheiler" Bruno Gröning (Akten des Hauptamtes), 1949–1950, 85, Werries [?] to Oberstadtdirektor, June 7, 1949; "Third Messiah": SH S 10/270, "Wunderheiler" Bruno Gröning (Akten des Hauptamtes), 1949–1950, 25, letter from Gronau to Herford Oberstadtdirektor, May 19, 1949.

[44] Two classic examples are Klaus Vondung, *Die Apokalypse in Deutschland* (Munich: DTV, 1988), and James M. Rhodes, *The Hitler Movement: A Modern Millenarian Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1980). Rhodes's work, inspired in part by the work of Norman Cohn and Eric Voegelin, characterized National Socialism as a "mutant, secular variety of apocalyptic thought" (29). David Redles, *Hitler's Millennial Reich: Apocalyptic Belief and the Search for Salvation* (New York: New York University Press, 2005) takes this topic in a different direction, depicting Nazism as a "spiritual movement created to meet . . . spiritual needs" (12). Unfortunately, Redles's account is overly deterministic, assuming that apocalyptic thinking will appear whenever there is crisis in human affairs. Peter Fritzsche, "Nazi Modern," *Modernism/Modernity* 3, no. 1 (1996): 1–22 is agnostic on the issue of the secularism of Nazi apocalypticism but sees it as a definitive aspect of a specific Nazi modernism.

[45] Christof Ribbat, *Religiöse Erregung: Protestantische Schwärmer im Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1996), 75.

[46] Linse, *Geisterseher und Wunderwirker*, 47–48.

[47] Linse, *Geisterseher und Wunderwirker*, 52.

[48] Stephan Bachter, "Nostradamus und der Mühlhiasl: Transformation und Wiederkehr von Prophezeiungen," *Augsburger Volkskundliche Nachrichten* 5, no. 10 (December 1999): 31.

[49] Vondung, *Apokalypse*, 22.

[50] Vondung, *Apokalypse*, 193–94.

[51] Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 172.

[52] First World War propaganda: Nicholas Stargardt, "Rumors of Revenge in the Second World War," in *Alltag—Erfahrung—Eigensinn: Historisch-anthropologische Erkundungen, ed.* Belinda Davis, Thomas Lindenberger and Michael Wildt (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2008), 381–82.

[53] Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15.

[54] Ulrich Linse, *Barfüßige Propheten: Erlöser der zwanziger Jahre* (Berlin: Siedler Vlg., 1983).

[55] Elaine Pagels, *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 38. See also Steigmann-Gall, *Holy Reich*; Heschel, *Aryan Jesus*; and Arthur W. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse: Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1993), especially chap. 10.

[56] Claus-E. Bärsch, "Die Geschichtsprophetie des Joseph Goebbels," in *Von kommenden Zeiten: Geschichtsprophetien im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Joachim H. Knoll and Julius H. Schoeps (Stuttgart: Burg Verlag, 1984), 175. See also Steigman-Gall, *Holy Reich*, 19 (esp. with reference to ideologist Dietrich Eckart).

[57] Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during WWII and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[58] Peter G. J. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*, rev. ed. (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1988), xxii. Mention must be made, too, of Saul Friedländer's notion of redemptive anti-Semitism, though he did not stress its specifically Christian element. Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, vol. 1, *The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), esp. chap. 3.

[59] Alon Confino, *A World without Jews: The Nazi Imagination from Persecution to Genocide* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).

[60] Herf, *Jewish Enemy*, 259.

[61] Bruno Grabinski, "Kriegsprophezeiungen," *Neues Tageblatt*, October 15, 1946, 3. Clipping located in Hauptstaatsarchiv Hannover, ZGS 2.1.

[62] Ulrike Camilla Gärtner, "Die wenig beachteten Lieblingskinder: Apokalypsefolgen im 20. Jahrhundert," in *Apokalypse—ein Prinzip Hoffnung? Ernst Bloch zum 100. Geburtstag*, ed. Richard W. Gassen und Bernhard Holeczek (Heidelberg: Edition Braus, 1985), 193.

[63] Monica Black, "Expellees Tell Tales: Partisan Blood Drinkers and the Cultural History of Violence after WWII," *History & Memory* 25, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2013): 77–110.

[64] Johannes-Künzig-Institut, Sammlung Karasek, Neue Sagenbildung, Reihe 4, Nr. 1.

[65] Alfred Dieck, "Der Weltuntergang am 17. März 1949 in Südhannover," *Neues Archiv für Niedersachsen* 20 (1950): 707.

[66] Dieck, "Weltuntergang," 706.

[67] Dieck, "Weltuntergang," 705.

[68] Dieck, "Weltuntergang," 707.

[69] Linse, *Geisterseher und Wunderwirker*, 192.

[70] J. F. C. Harrison, *The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism, 1780–1850* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 11–12.

[71] Trampler, *Die große Umkehr*, 107.

[72] Jacob Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*, trans. David Ratmoko (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 43.

[73] Conrad Adlmaier, *Blick in die Zukunft* (Traunstein: Chiemgau Druck, 1950), 23.

[74] Trampler, *Die große Umkehr*.

[75] SH/S10/270, "Wunderheiler" Bruno Gröning (Akten des Hauptamtes), 1949–50, 161, Kampfgruppe gegen den Nihilismus an den Herrn Oberstadtdirektor, June 26, 1949.

[76] SH/S10/270, "Wunderheiler" Bruno Gröning (Akten des Hauptamtes), 1949–50, 235, Europäische Missions-Gesellschaft an den Herrn Oberstadtdirektor, August 24, 1949.

[77] SH/S10/270, "Wunderheiler" Bruno Gröning (Akten des Hauptamtes), 1949–50, 85, Werries [?] to Oberstadtdirektor, June 7, 1949.

[78] Pagels, *Revelations*, 73.

[79] Grabinski, "Kriegsprophezeiungen."

10: On All Channels: Hans Bender, the Supernatural, and the Mass Media

Anna Lux

Introduction

In the field of parapsychology, Hans Bender (1907–91) was one of the most renowned figures in the Federal Republic of Germany. His vast acclaim was due to his examinations into the phenomena of extrasensory perception, clairvoyance, ghosts, phantoms, and spirits.[1] Among the public, Bender—nicknamed the *Spukprofessor* ("Professor Poltergeist")—was widely known for his lectures and media persona. Beginning in the 1950s, he made regular appearances in the press and on the radio, reaching the peak of his popularity when his name became associated with the "occult wave" and with Uri Geller during the 1970s.[2]

Unlike many of his scientific colleagues, Bender distinguished himself and his research by seeking direct contact with the popular media. His intense involvement with mass media, although unconventional, contributed to his fame as a parapsychologist. He worked together with local and regional newspapers, illustrated magazines and tabloids, radio and television. Through these diverse channels, Bender reached a variety of audiences and constituencies: physicians and psychologists, an educated public, as well as regular readers of *Bild*, the most popular German tabloid newspaper.[3]

Even within Bender's lifetime, Eberhard Bauer, a former assistant, called Bender's cooperation with the mass media a "high-wire act,"[4] because it required such careful negotiation of the space between the scientific field and media world. The present essay explores how Bender's relationship with the media developed over the course of his active scientific career between the mid-1930s and mid-1970s. It examines the ways in which this relationship contributed to his success and how Bender utilized mass media for the establishment, legitimization, and advancement of parapsychology, which in the 1930s was a young and marginal discipline on the frontier of science, religion, and entertainment.[5] I will show how the epistemological peculiarities of the discipline, the specific requirements of the media (above all of those of radio and television),

as well as the cultural atmosphere of the times intertwined and created a synergistic effect that helps to explain Bender's media success and the public interest in parapsychology in the 1960s and 1970s. I will also show how the huge popular interest in this research field proved to be Janus-faced, in relation to the lack of sufficient scientific boundary-work. The concept of *boundary-work* was first introduced by the sociologist Thomas F. Gieryn in 1983 and refers to an ideological rhetorical style that, when formulated, appertains to "attributions of selected characteristics that an institution of science establishes for purposes of constructing a social boundary that sets the perimeters of 'non-scientific' intellectual, professional activities."[6] The extent to which the inadequate boundary-work affected the recognition of parapsychology in the scientific field is one of the questions this article will discuss in its conclusion.

Some recent works have examined the interrelationship between parapsychology, the paranormal, and the public. These studies concern the presentation of parapsychological phenomena in the mass media of the twentieth century in Western cultures.[7] With respect particularly to popular culture and entertainment, the media studies researcher Annette Hill has suggested that a "paranormal turn" took place in the Anglo-American cultural sphere since the 1990s. Hill concluded that this engagement in paranormal matters is a response to anxiety and uncertainty, allowing for a possibility to play with ideas of mortality, death, and afterlife, or to deal with both individual and national trauma.[8] Some of her findings can also be applied to the period covered by this study. The historian Sabine Doering-Manteuffel, in her recent work, emphasizes this close connection historically between mass media and occultism in Germany.[9] Drawing on examples from a variety of additional publications, including the established journal *Der Spiegel* and the popular tabloid *Bild*, Gerhard Mayer has shown that over a period of approximately fourty years, from the 1950s to the 1990s, the contestable character of parapsychology and the instability of its phenomena made these topics particularly well suited for media coverage.[10]

Though relevant to my research, such studies have seldom taken science into account from a historical perspective. They have not systematically investigated the interactions between science and the public, or the *active* role of parapsychology in cooperating with mass media. It is only in the last ten to fifteen years that media history and the relationships between science and the public sphere have become focal points of historical research.[11] This new direction addresses the idea that "what science is . . ., is not only determined in the arena of scientific practice, but also in the public."[12]

The relationship between parapsychology and the public can also be understood in reference to the notion of "cultures of knowledge." In this conception, the varying degrees of contextualization of knowledge and

knowledge production play an important role.[13] Stefan Böschen, a sociologist in the field of knowledge, who advanced these approaches, calls disciplines with "strong contextualization" a *science-in-context*.[14] Such disciplines are closely interrelated to other fields of knowledge, adopt their theories, or refer to their central concepts. In contrast to science-in-context, Böschen conceptualizes *republics of science*. These are disciplines that are very loosely connected to their academic or public context. As an example, Böschen refers to the field of particle physics.

Based on the set of characteristics Böschen implemented, parapsychology could also be described as an example of a science-in-context. Regarding relations to other disciplines, we find references to approaches from physics and depth psychology. Moreover, parapsychology remains in close relation to its nonscientific context and bears a high degree of practical application. Parapsychological topics, hypotheses, and findings provoke a keen public interest and are discussed widely beyond the academic milieu. Furthermore, the role of parapsychology as science-in-context was promoted by its protagonists. By analyzing Bender's media relations, my paper shows that he indeed was willing to respond to signals received from society.

In the following, I can illustrate this interpretation of parapsychology as science-in-context only with regard to the context of mass media. Additionally, this relationship between parapsychology and the mass media was highly influenced by Hans Bender, his personality, experiences, and strategies. Even if this player within the parapsychological field was in some respect exceptional, interpreting parapsychology as being a science-in-context is one key to an adequate understanding of this discipline and its interaction with other aspects of society.

The following analysis primarily investigates the relations of parapsychology to the public through Bender's engagement with the media. In reference to paranormal phenomena, it shows both the fascination and the peculiarity of such a discourse in the media and the sciences within the Federal Republic of Germany. Hans Bender, his experiments, and his various forms of "staging" stand at the core of this article. As a successful media personality with a broad public, Bender was a controversial figure in the scientific field. This article begins by sketching out parapsychology as a topic area and describes Bender's career. It then moves into a discussion of his motivations in establishing such close cooperation with the mass media and the consequences of this relationship.

Hans Bender (1907–91) and Parapsychology

In 1889, the philosopher Max Dessoir (1867–1947) coined the term *parapsychology*. The prefix *para* refers to its adjacency to psychology, as an area that is "occupied with phenomena, which appears 'next to' that which is

familiar to us and graspable through our common modes of understanding the world,"[15] however which cannot yet be explained. Parapsychology's precursors include eighteenth century's "mesmerism," the investigation of spiritism beginning with the founding of the *Society for Psychical Research* in London in 1882, and "scientific occultism" from around 1900. As a scientific discipline, it examines perception outside the known sensory organs, such as extrasensory perception and psychokinesis. Abilities like telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition can be summarized as extrasensory perceptions. Psychokinesis refers to a direct psychic effect taking a material form, which would include phenomena like the ability to bend spoons or make an inanimate object move with the concentration of one's mind. Often these phenomena are categorized as "psi-phenomena." They are investigated both through examinations of spontaneous phenomena—those that occur unexpectedly in all parts of society—as well as through deliberate experimentation. Whether with the help of paranormally talented mediums or not particularly talented laypersons, the aim is to produce specific phenomena in laboratory conditions and to evaluate them either qualitatively or by means of quantitative statistics.

Early on, Bender was interested in a wide array of supernatural phenomena. He first encountered their scientific examination while studying in Paris.[16] In 1933, he presented his doctoral thesis, which dealt with an experiment involving subconscious processes and extrasensory perception, and supervised by philosopher and psychologist Erick Rothacker (1888–1965) in Bonn.[17] The results of Bender's studies up until then, and their positive reception by interested psychologists like C. G. Jung, motivated Bender to pursue the establishment of parapsychology as an academic subject in Germany. He followed with much interest similar developments in the USA, where the integration of the discipline was progressing at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, and where Joseph Banks Rhine's *Extrasensory Perception* (1934) was honored with recognition not only by the scientific world but by the broader public and the media as well.[18]

In the mid-1930s, Bender continued his research in Bonn and Freiburg and completed his medical training.[19] In 1941, Bender made his qualification with his habilitation dissertation on "Experimental Visions"[20] and subsequently accepted an invitation from the Reich University in Strasbourg, which had been founded by the National Socialists (Bender had been a member of the NSDAP since 1937). In Strasbourg, Bender held the position of director of the Institute for Psychology and Clinical Psychology and was a professor of psychology.[21] During this time, Bender also had intense contact with Friedrich Spieser (1902–87), an editor from Alsace, who had ample finances and an intense interest in alternative medicine, astrology, and dowsing (radiesthesia). Through a significant endowment on Spieser's part, the Paracelsus Institute (for research on astrology, etc.)

was founded. In this independent institute, Bender was made responsible for insuring the nature of the scientific methods and maintaining control over the experiments. Bender was thus able to both teach general psychology in the university setting and practice parapsychological research at the same time in a private structure. The opportunity to test different institutional structures in both academic and nonacademic contexts aided Bender as he established a network of interested people and founded a technical library. Bender's various posts furnished him with multiple orientations and perspectives. One could say that within his field of research he had the liberty of two minds. This was echoed during the "Action against esoteric doctrines and so-called secret disciplines" (*Aktion gegen Geheimlehren und sogenannte Geheimwissenschaften*) in June 1941, shortly after Bender moved to Strasbourg.[22] It was during this "action," which followed Rudolf Hess's flight to England, that the National Socialists' strong antagonism to occultism reached its peak. The Gestapo, the SS Security Service, and the Reich Security Main Office (SS-Reichssicherheitshauptamt) used Hess's renegade act of escape as an opportunity to harass esotericists and occultists, anthroposophists and theosophists, which resulted in arrests, interrogations, and the confiscation of valuable libraries. State suppression was mainly directed at practitioners and representatives of ideological groups. Given this, one could venture to think that Bender would have been vulnerable to similar actions against himself. There was, however, a standard delineated that scientific research concerning occult and paranormal phenomena was not prohibited—an important loophole, so to speak, for Bender. Nevertheless, he was put under some pressure during the course of this action, being interrogated and having his institute investigated. Yet Bender also actually benefited from Special Action Hess, receiving some of the confiscated books that were to become part of his technical library. Such experiences in Strasbourg reflect the vascillating stance toward occultism and parapsychology prevalent in the Third Reich.

Shortly afterwards, the Allies occupied Strasbourg. The institute as well as the university were thus closed, and the Americans held Bender captive for six months. He returned to Freiburg in 1946, where he was not directly rehired by the university because of his years of membership in the NSDAP. Despite this, he continued to lecture in the Department of Psychology, speaking on topics of general psychology and parapsychology. It wasn't until 1954, in the wake of the contested §131, which allowed reappointment of former Nazi officials who had been removed from service during denazification procedures, that Bender was reinstated as associate professor for psychology and the frontier areas of psychology at the University of Freiburg.

Based on his previous experiences, resources, and contacts, Bender attempted to establish parapsychology as a scientific discipline after the

war. In 1946, he launched the Research Community for Psychological Frontier Areas, a foundation that collected funds for the setup of a research institute. Subsequently, in 1950, the Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health (Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene, IGPP) was opened. It was located in a separate building in Freiburg and built with French funding (it was within the French occupation zone), as well as with funds from the office of the senior mayor and the university. The IGPP had at its disposal a considerable technical library but worked with a minimal staff. Financially, the institute depended on donations, on funds from foundations, and on other third-party funding. For these reasons, Bender can be considered one of the first and most successful external fund-raisers for the University of Freiburg.[23]

As professor at the University of Freiburg and director of the IGPP, Bender was able to promote the work of the institute nationally and internationally and in parallel was able to also work toward the establishment of parapsychology as an academic discipline at the university. An important step in the institutionalization of parapsychology and frontier areas of psychology was the institute's publication, beginning in 1957, of the scientific journal *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie* (Journal for parapsychology and frontier areas of psychology). In 1967, Bender was promoted from a professor seat to the chair for psychology and frontier areas of psychology. This was accompanied by the founding of a Division for Frontier Areas of Psychology within the Department for Psychology. Moreover, the frontier areas were officially included in the examination regulations for psychology in 1978 and thus became potentially relevant for final examinations.[24] After Bender's retirement in 1975, Johannes Mischo (1930–2001) took over the chair, which he occupied until 1998.[25] Bender remained director of the IGPP until his death in 1991, when Mischo succeeded him in that position as well. In 1992, the institute received a considerable donation from Asta Holler, coheiress of Volkswagen Financial Services. Today, it is one of the world's biggest organizations investigating paranormal phenomena.

Looking at parapsychology in the first half of the twentieth century in general reveals a close interplay between the discipline, the public, and the media. This interplay was not to be found in the already established disciplines, such as psychology and German language and literature studies. In contrast, parapsychology also shares similarities with other border sciences, such as Ice Age studies (Eiszeitlehre), or not yet established sciences like folklife studies.[26] Recently, Stacy Horn described Joseph B. Rhine (1895–1980), the founder of the first parapsychological research laboratory at an American university, as an "academic rock star."[27] One could suppose that the ambitious Bender would have been familiar with Rhine around the time he earned his doctorate. He even may have been inspired

by Rhine's involvement with the press beginning in the mid-1930s, which may in turn have led Bender to be more open-minded toward the benefits of mass media. In any case, as early as 1936, Bender was well aware of the general fascination of many people with the extraordinary, recognizing that "'occult' phenomena played a role too large to be expunged from the popular consciousness."[28] At the same time, he knew about the risks in dealing with the public and mass media. As cooperation with the media was generally held in low esteem within the scientific community, Bender legitimately feared harming his reputation and the reputation of his discipline. Moreover, there was a risk that the media would reduce his work to clichés and stereotypes and injure his intentions rather than advance them. Despite this, Bender decided that the advantages of active and well-directed public relations outweighed the disadvantages. This decision was tested by an event that occurred in 1935, which strictly shaped Bender's handling of the mass media from that point on.

Results Out of Control? A Media Controversy about Bender's Clairvoyance Experiments in 1935

In July 1935, a number of newspapers featured the eye-catching headline "Clairvoyance Proven by Science,"[29] referring to an article Bender had published in the German *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*.[30] The authors praised the courage of the young scholar for addressing a question from a long neglected field and stated that "no one had the right anymore to claim that clairvoyance did not exist."[31] Bender appreciated this public attention in part but was also concerned that the topic be treated carefully. In order to temper sensationalizing media coverage of his research, and to place himself in a good strategic position within the controversy, he accepted an offer to publish a statement in the *Völkischer Beobachter* (People's observer), the main National Socialist newspaper. He was, he wrote, "surprised and astonished to see that his results had somehow started to live a life of their own in the public."[32] He also declared that "it had not been his initial intention to thereby provide any ultimate proof to attest to the existence of clairvoyance. . . . The one thing that I could state unconditionally though, . . . is that according to my convictions (and those of my colleagues) our research has succeeded in revealing ways of perception through other than the known sensory organs."[33]

Contrary to Bender's hopes, his strategic move was not an all-out success. Several members of the National Socialist antioccult scene in the *Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt* (National Socialist's People Welfare) and the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda[34] used the controversy to launch a countercampaign in the media.[35] Their "enlightenment campaign against clairvoyance, telepathy and fairground-astrology"

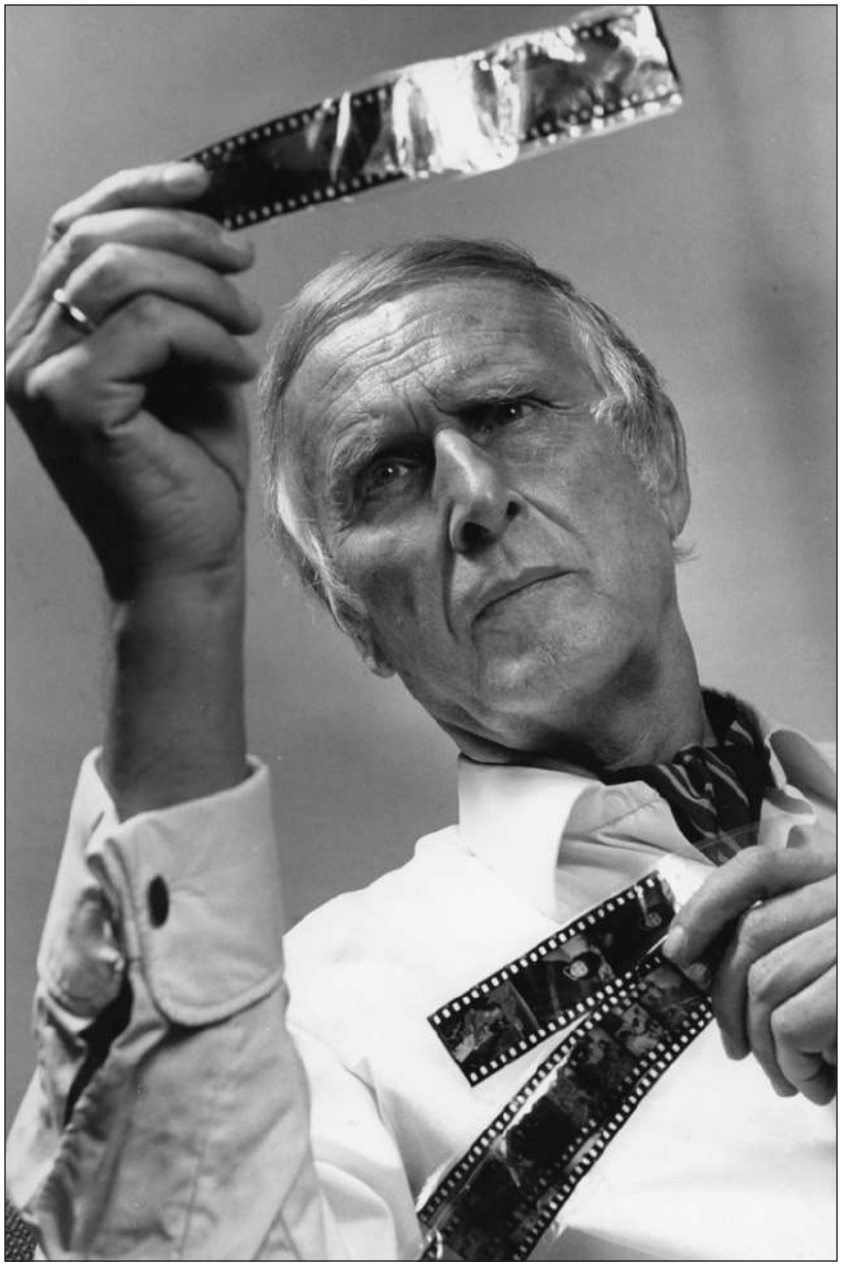

Fig. 10.1. Hans Bender, 1970, photo by Leif Geiges, IGPP Archive, 2/4.

was intended to fight occultism as a whole and "the awful experiments of a certain psychologist from Bonn"[36] (meaning Hans Bender) in particular. The critical voices concerning the occult dominated the news for the following days.[37] Bender no longer appeared to be innovative but rather naive, and his research, fraudulent. Parapsychological research was made out to be synonymous with occult practice, equivalent to be a belief in clairvoyance or astrology. The press labeled occultism a threat to public health (*volksschädigend*), something it insisted had been "cultivated" (*hochgezüchtet*) in Marxist and Jewish circles in the 1920s.[38] Depending upon their place of publication, the individual articles differed only in the degree of their hostility. One *Völkischer Beobachter* headline read, "Clairvoyance Under Scientific Scrutiny: Leading Scientists Challenge and Dispute the Validity of Dr. Bender's Investigations."[39]

In response to these attacks, Bender petitioned high-ranking representatives of the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, and the tables turned again. In his conversation with the ministry, Bender criticized the news coverage, stating that it had not differentiated between his scientific approach and that of the believers and occult practitioners, astrologers, dowsers, diviners, and clairvoyants. Bender claimed that these occult practices were undertaken by people who *believed* in the occult, while his task was to examine paranormal phenomena nonprejudicially. Only a scientific approach, Bender held, was capable of ensuring both the discovery of fraud and the truth behind extrasensory perception. Scientific occultism had to be distinguished from occult practices with regard to their very different concerns and objectives.

Bender's argument found full support among officials in Berlin. While critics of the occult were silenced by high-ranking representatives of the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Bender was given the opportunity to publish yet another statement in the press. In it, he claimed that the initial articles on his research had distorted his results and been published without his consent. He explained that it was essential to differentiate between scientific and practical occultism, that he himself was an opponent of superstition of any kind, and that parapsychology was an invaluable tool to prevent misuse and to fight and protect the masses through education and information.[40] The following days' news also featured articles from Bender's colleagues in Bonn, who voiced their support for "research, not sensation."[41] Throughout the various phases of this debate and Bender's first media foray, political, ideological, media-specific and scientific dimensions overlapped. They established a pattern in which initial sensationalism and scandal would ultimately yield before Bender's clarifications.

This initial controversy reflected typical ambivalences in debates on parapsychology and occultism in the first half of the twenthieth century, though it is true that in the Third Reich these had a stronger

political-ideological tone than they had before 1933 or after 1945.[42] Most contributions in the debate can be seen as attempts to legitimize or delegitimize parapsychology as an academic discipline. At the same time, in a sense, the discipline was partly supported during the Third Reich. Parapsychology had made the news, and Bender became its most prominent figure. Ministries and high-ranking party officials supported him and promised to continue to do so. In correspondence with Professor of Psychology Erich Rudolf Jaenisch in Marburg, Germany, Bender wrote after a conversation with a person in the Propaganda Ministry, "The extraordinarily generous and comprehensive regulation, which has been formulated for the yet more dubious astrology and chirology, etc. . . . has us expecting, that the scientific parapsychology will not be stymied."[43] As has been established in other contributions in this volume (particularly by Schellinger/Anton/Schetsche and Kurlander), this again reveals the indefinite official stance toward occultism in the Third Reich. Being ostensibly opposed to occultism, the Third Reich nevertheless sponsored border-scientific research in various respects.

This confrontation with the mass media was an ambiguous yet important experience for Bender. While coping with critics was at times unpleasant, he also gained confidence from it. One can argue that—in regard to his later career—the experience helped him understand the processes and dynamics of mass media in 1935. A number of plausible hypothesises can be drawn on the basis of Bender's experiences with mass media. Firstly, parapsychology had turned out to be a scientific topic that appealed to media audiences. News coverage—positive *or* negative—could result in funding and in other resources. Active and purposeful media relations were well suited to making parapsychology better known to the public. Second, as newspapers had proven a clear tendency to simplify and reproduce stereotypes, experts were needed to offer interpretations and arguments. Third, the events from 1935 had shown that—once initiated—a media campaign was hard to control. Thus, it was crucial to influence news discourse actively, right from the beginning. Fourth, the persona of the expert was important to render complex or controversial topics graspable. In consequence, it was necessary for parapsychological protagonists like Bender to step into the spotlight occasionally. Fifth, the press coverage had shown that paranormal experiences and practices played a significant role in the lives of many people. Since people continued to interpret supernatural phenomena as the result of clairvoyance or of ghosts or spirits, Bender felt that it was urgent to offer scientific explanations for the paranormal and its mechanisms that were easy to understand. Therefore, alongside research into the paranormal, he deemed it important to differentiate through clarification the possible consequences of occult practices in parapsychology. In short, Bender's public relation strategy was active, argumentative, clear, and informative, and at the same time it was

successful because it catered to a public interested in parapsychological ideas. To my knowledge, Bender never systematically reflected on a public relations strategy, but nevertheless, his experiences in dealing with the media in the 1930s seems to have been of great importance for his career and his appreciation of public relation after 1945.

Mental Health and Parapsychology: Public Relations since the 1950s

West German society underwent significant change during Germany's postwar reconstruction. Between the late 1950s and mid-1970s, liberalization took place in the economic and political sphere as well as in the public opinion. Important aspects of these social developments were individualization, a combination of a belief in technological and scientific progress accompanied by an expanded fear of the consequences of this progress, and a continued secularization within society. During the 1960s, there was an overall move toward alternative religions, both eastern and western spiritual practices (in the wake of the rise of New Age and esotericism).[44] Mass media also became a much more important part of public life and science (medialization).[45] In this complex and ambivalent fabric of "reflexive modernity" (Ulrich Beck), parapsychologists were confronted with a continuous public interest in the supernatural, and Bender tried to position parapsychology in the media discourse.

After the war, Bender established active relationships with the public through the media in the context of the IGPP, which he founded in 1950. For him, public relations were an essential element of his Freiburg-based institute: they helped to initiate both societal recognition and the approval of the academic establishment. Bender's primary goal was to make the work that resulted in the institute become better known. To achieve this, he tried to consolidate the parapsychological explanations of psi-phenomena (as opposed to the explanations of skeptics or believers). He was also continuously concerned with networking and fundraising for the institute.

Mental health was of central importance for the institute and its public relations. The German equivalent term *Psychohygiene* even forms part of the name of the IGPP (Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene). It was not by accident that Bender named his institution like this when he founded it in 1950. Since parapsychology already worked directly with people, dealing with occult phenomena, with the related experiences, and with their effects (including people who thought they are possessed by ghosts), it was not a stretch from there to do preventive and educational work, and to create a counseling center for information and therapy. Bender explicitly stated that the field of the occult is

precarious because it "includes the danger(s) of escapism, social consequences of maladjustment, and a serious threat to mental health and of occult fraud and exploitation. . . . Psychohygienics [had] the essential task to educate people about the different forms of paranormal experiences and to offer a scheme of orientation that people could easily understand and by which they could label what otherwise troubled them," because, as Bender stated, "naming the demon that troubles you is often the first step to getting rid of it."[46]

Focusing on on mental health with regard to strategy was a pertinent move on the part of Bender, since for a discipline on the frontier between science, religion, coping with life, and entertainment, preventative and educational work were much needed for the legitimization of its practices and for its ultimate existence. Moreover, mental health as a concept had long been established in the United States. It was recognized by the public and the scientific community and received state funding. As mental health's institutionalization had already started and received financial as well as moral state support during the time of the Weimar Republic, Bender had good reason to hope that it could become equally important in Germany after the war.[47] Bender tried to establish mental health as a critical objective for science and as a public policy after the Second World War, emphasizing information, education, and counseling. *Psychohygiene* thus became an important service that he and the IGPP could offer the public. It was essential to justify the existence of parapsychology—no matter if the controversial psi existed or not.[48]

Generally, the IGPP's public relations strategy aimed at *normalizing* the discourse on psi. It strove to treat paranormal experiences as an ordinary part of human life and to prevent their marginalization or pathologization. Bender wanted to offer explanations and interpretations of these phenomena that were easily comprehensible and appealed to a wide public. He was quick to understand that in order to reach this goal it was not enough to write articles for scientific journals. He had also to include the platforms of communication with which most people were accustomed, including (tabloid) newspapers, magazines, radio, and television.

Financial Means, the Prospect of Good Results and "a Huge Amount of Viewers' Letters"

Another reason for Bender's interest in working closely with the media was his hope for concrete earnings from it. His institute had an ambitious agenda as a research and information center, but found itself in a precarious situation financially and in terms of staffing. Bender's income for writing newspaper articles, and appearing on television or radio, was an important source of revenue.[49] He also worked to secure potential

donors for the institute, once stating in an interview how he had become a "business man."[50]

Another motive for media collaboration was the possibility of receiving new data through media exposure. When Bender appeared on TV, on the radio, or in newspaper articles, the institute usually received letters or calls from viewers reporting their own experiences with the supernatural. Bender, who was particularly interested in spontaneous phenomena, was able to use these reports as a source for his research. He set up an empirical collection, which gave a quantitative and qualitative overview of paranormal experiences evaluated with regard to particular research questions.

Attempts to gather data for research by encouraging the public to share their experiences date back to the nineteenth century. By using mass media, however, Bender was able to address an even larger group of people—and one from various societal backgrounds. The empirical material was therefore not only a by-product of Bender's media presence and appearances but also rather the result of his pointed encouragement. A series of articles called "Your Sixth Sense" from 1967, which appeared in Germany's most known tabloid newspaper *Bild*, provides a good example of this. At the end of each article—each of which presented different paranormal phenomena, whether telepathy, clairvoyance, or poltergeist—readers were asked to send in their own experiences with the supernatural. The articles must have hit the right note, because after three weeks *Bild* had received more than 1,500 letters. These articles are also a good example of Bender's attempt to normalize the discourse on the paranormal. In his open call for viewer letters, the author of the articles, with whom Bender worked closely, wrote, "Today no one needs to be ashamed anymore for having had supernatural experiences. Parapsychologists from all countries confirm the existence of a sixth sense."[51]

In the same way, television was important for introducing psi-topics to a mass audience. In 1974, when the artist Friedrich Jürgenson (1903–87) tried to perceive voices from the afterlife through the radio during the evening broadcast (at 9:45 p.m.), millions followed the event on their TV screens.[52] They became potential witnesses, who could form their own opinions on psi-phenomena. Bender certainly enjoyed this occasion as it was one that had the potential to prove the existence of psi in front of so many people.

Who was the audience, who read these articles and watched the broadcasts, who sent in viewers' letters? Recent studies indicate that categories like gender, religion, and regional provenance don't have a significant impact on the prevalence of supernatural experiences, whereas age seems relevant in the sense that the number of experiences related to death and crisis increases with increasing age (prophetic dreams, apparitions).[53] The interest in the paranormal, in contrast, is complicated to investigate. The IGPP did analyze the *Bild* readers' letters but focused on

the details of the content rather than on administering a systematic evaluation of the social demographics indicated.[54]

The type of media through which Bender presented himself to the public was, however, indicative of who the addressed public actually was. Bender wanted to address a public as wide as possible and to reach people of diverse social and educational backgrounds. He consequently appeared both in renowned and sophisticated radio formats targeting a more educated public and in reputable TV formats of the public broadcasters. At the same time, he also published in glossy magazines and tabloids like *Bild* (which was not read only by "the common man" but had a wide readership that included all social classes).

Besides eyewitness reports, from early on parapsychology used technical devices for trying to prove "elusive psi." Since scientific occultism's beginnings in the nineteenth century, apparatus had been set to use to document the paranormal. In the second half of the twentieth century, radio and television even more so, because it had both an aural and a visual component—fed Bender's fascination with technology and offered the possibility of documenting and recording "psi in action" and using them for scientific purposes. Bender stated that technical aids were "methodologically indispensable," because they could transform controversial situations into events which could be analyzed over and over again.[55]

Strategies of Popularization and the Construction of Authenticity

If one tries to find reasons for the strong public presence of parapsychology since the late 1960s, one must take into account that there was a large public interest in these matters and that parapsychology was a science-in-context, characterized by an extensive interconnection between science and society. However, neither this fascination nor the status of parapsychology fully explains Bender's popularity (his successor Mischo, for example, never attained comparable public attention).[56] One also needs to consider the way Bender represented parapsychology as a science in public.

Bender knew how to popularize and to frame parapsychological themes so that they would be graspable for large audiences in the press, television, and radio. He used techniques of simplification, illustration, concretization, emotionalization, dramatization, and narration.[57] Unlike his scientific colleagues, he was willing to appear through channels that were otherwise regarded as "manipulative" or "unsophisticated." However, it was those everyday channels—popular magazines, tabloids, and TV, the most important mass medium from the late 1950s on—that were most a part of people's lives.[58] Bender also understood how best to

take advantage of different media formats: he contributed photographs for articles in illustrated magazines, gave long and complex explanations over the radio, picked up on current developments in articles from daily newspapers, and applied visualization, pluralization, and emotionalization, while on television to achieve immediate effects. Bender considered who was being addressed, and adapted the style and level of complexity accordingly—without reducing or simplifying too much. Thus, his contributions to the renowned and highbrow radio show *Die Aula*[59] (broadcasted between 10:30 and 11:00 a.m.) differed significantly in style and form from those of illustrated magazines.[60] Bender didn't distinguish between "sophisticated" and "common" audiences; he confronted both with scientific terms and interpretations, and entertained both by examples of psi from everyday life, which were often fascinating, particularly due to their firsthand origins.

The professor presented himself as a competent, objective scientist, who intended to explain the yet unexplained. Often wearing a turtleneck or silk scarf with his suits, his style of clothing also added to the picture of the modern, progressive, and nonelitist scientist. For press photos he appeared both serious and smiled at the same time: in the audiovisual media this picture of the worldly, approachable academic was underlined by his agreeable voice and the impression that he was narrating rather than lecturing.[61] His discussion and listening skills in talk shows were remarkable, and he worked on his improvisational skills. At a time when it was very common on TV to read prepared passages out loud, Bender eventually dispensed with doing so. By the 1970s, he ad-libbed, permitting himself to be perceived as confident and authentic. This had a great effect on TV talk shows, where he put his "playful" rhetoric to work against skeptics and believers who were often inexperienced in unrehearsed dialogue.

Once adjusted to the new style, Bender not only acted with ease but handled the public and mass media creatively. He appeared as an expert but gave an entertaining dimension to science and knowledge by evoking suspense, curiosity, tension, and empathy while talking or writing about the supernatural, clairvoyance, prophetic dreams, and poltergeists. Bender actively played with entertaining elements: "His lectures, which he held each Wednesday evening in an overcrowded hall of the University of Freiburg, were cozy and scary, like listening to ghost stories next to the fireplace. When Hans Bender, an amiable conversationalist and brilliant narrator with an almost hypnotic charisma, reported about his experiences with the para- and supernatural in a mysterious and dimly lit hall and played tapes about poltergeists and films about haunting . . ., a delightfully scary ambiance would spread throughout the audience."[62]

In addition to creating this kind of atmosphere, Bender also entertained audiences, particularly through illustration and examples from audio and visual material. On the radio, he worked with original witness

accounts of ghosts.[63] Photographs in magazine articles could show both, the research practice of parapsychology as well as paranormal phenomena in a more spectacular, even aesthetic presentation. As an audiovisual medium, television provided an intense immediacy and offered other ways to link science and entertainment. Live experiments, such as those with the Dutch clairvoyant Gerard Croiset (1909–80), were supposed to inform viewers about recent results in parapsychology—but it also created excitement. Pluralization was another way of establishing interest and an emotional connection with audiences. Bender provided continuous controversy during his media appearances, confronting psi advocates and opponents, such as Frankfurt School sociologist Theodor W. Adorno (1903–69), and engaging in debates that were as serious as they were entertaining.[64]

The TV series *Psi: Berichte über Unerklärliches* (Psi: Reports on the Inexplicable) was the best known, most successful, but also most contested of Bender's television programs. In late 1974 and early 1975, the three documentaries *Stimmen auf Tonband* (Voices on Audiotape; dealing with electronic voice phenomena), *Spuk* (Poltergeists), and *Der Geller-Effekt* (The Geller Effect) were broadcast. According to the journalist host, the aim of the series was to report on paranormal phenomena "in a plain documentary fashion adequate to our skeptical curiosity."[65] Bender appeared as the expert: he explained the phenomena and their background, talked to people with paranormal experiences, debated with skeptics, and led experiments with mediums. In this way, the often dry dissemination of knowledge gained an emotional aspect. An episode about poltergeists, for example, began with a scene in which four people reported excitedly about a supposed ghost encounter they had just lived through. The camera was not positioned in an external, observing way but rather moved within the group, creating the impression for the viewers that they were present themselves.

This staging of live experiments and first hand accounts promoted an emotional intensity that was characteristic throughout all three TV episodes. In the last part of the first show on "Voices on Audiotape," a live experiment was carried out: the artist and "medium" Friedrich Jürgenson was supposed to record a voice off the radio that was supposedly speaking from the beyond. Jürgenson, under enormous pressure to produce something "unambiguous," tried to invoke the phenomena by talking intensely, sweating profusely in the process. The experts, Bender, and a technician, observed the procedure strictly, while a camera ran and minutes passed without anything happening. When the experiment finally produced some results, Jürgenson appeared to be so relieved that his feelings—captured by a long shot of his face—could be shared by viewers. Fear, tension, and relief were consciously presented to audiences in an effort to stimulate their emotional participation. Bender thought

such methods were crucial for understanding the paranormal and stated, "Only an impression of the atmosphere, of those affected, and the way they reacted can create an image of what is going on."[66]

Yet Bender was criticized for the psi series from different sides, leading him to end his cooperation.[67] What had been functioning well in different formats now gained a new dynamic. Why, one might ask? One reason was the format itself, which aimed strongly for emotional effects—a result of the changing media landscape. Up until that point, Bender's public appearances had been characterized by a balance of clarification, information, and entertainment. In this new format, the focus was clearly shifting toward the latter. Another factor influencing the change was the societal conditions of the times. Not only had the media and its interaction with science changed, but since the late 1960s there also had been a stronger interest in alternative religions and alternative spiritual practices. In addition, the appearance of Uri Geller and the phenomena of "spoon-bending" brought a strong fascination for occult and paranormal phenomena during the 1970s, wherefore Bender deemed this time a new "occult wave" (similar to the occult wave during the 1920s). Bender, his methods, and explanatory approaches of psi and the IGPP were now competing with a multiplicity of phenomena, agents, and interpretations. In light of this, one must wonder if scientific boundary-work (like that described by Gieryn) would have helped to shift parapsychology more toward the scientific forum and to distinguish it from the New Age, the "occult wave," and the mass-media.[68] Parapsychology has often been labeled a pseudoscience, but in the 1960s and 1970s, it had strong enough institutional foundations in Germany and other countries (USA, Netherlands, Soviet Union) that it was able to practice its own boundary-work. This certainly could have been of great use when New Age, esotericism, and the "occult wave" were mushrooming. But it didn't happen. Hans Bender understood parapsychology already as a science-in-context, the research field of which was fed from societal dynamics and the field's interaction with them. He was strongly interested in the positioning of the field in everyday reality. This means that parapsychology in Germany at that time couldn't make and in fact didn't want to make clear demarcations between science and nonscience.

Conclusion

Hans Bender was a media professional in a double sense—in his work with the "medium" as well as in his handling of the media and the public. Early on, he recognized the modus operandi of the mass media and decided to use it to further his field within the sciences, within his institution, and within his career. After the war, as a lecturer (and later professor) at the University of Freiburg and director of the IGPP, Bender combined

Fig. 10.2. Reconstruction of a supposed poltergeist phenomenon, 1949, photo by Leif Geiges, IGPP Archive, 2/4.

media relations with his own interests: the legitimization of parapsychology as a scientific discipline, the normalization of the discourse on psi, and the mobilization of resources.

In this context, mental health functioned as a central link between science and public, parapsychology and mass media. Due to this link, which provided clarification, information, and guidance, parapsychology presented itself as an applied and practical discipline to the public and the scientific community. Beyond questions concerning the existence of paranormal phenomena, mental health services were an important justification for Bender's work. Besides scientific lectures and expert interviews, Bender served a multiplicity of media formats and skillfully adapted his form of presentation for his respective audiences. In doing so, he achieved broad popularity.

Bender dominated the professional discourse about the paranormal in Germany until the end of the 1960s, and was able to help shape the popular discourse through the 1970s, when he reached the peak of his popularity. However, in the course of the "occult wave," a lot of different interpretations competed for the paranormal spotlight between the poles of science, religion, and entertainment. In this constellation, Bender opted for a continuous and intense media relationship under the heading of a science-of-context, and he adapted to the transforming media environment. He succeeded to mobilize resources—not least from Asta Holler, later heir to the Volkswagen Financial Services fortune—through his media presence. The neglected scientific boundary-work however proved to impair the discipline when circumstances changed in the 1970s, and it is partly responsible for parapsychology's continuous struggle for recognition even today.

Notes

I would like to thank Monica Black und Eric Kurlander for the helpful comments and careful revision of this text. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

[1] A catalogue of Bender's writings can be found on the website for the Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene, accessed January 12, 2015, http://www.igpp.de/german/varia/bendbib.htm.

[2] In 1974, Uri Geller bent spoons and repaired watches in the German TV program *Drei mal neun*, supposedly by the means of paranormal abilities. He caused a wave of media coverage and public debate, also because similar effects were reported to have occurred in some viewers' homes.

[3] See the comprehensive press collections at the archive of the Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health (Institut für Grenzgebiete der Parapsychologie und Psychohygiene, IGPP, repository 40/10) and the press portfolio at the archive of the University of Freiburg (UAF, repository D 35). Due to source access, I confine myself to the repositories of the historical archive of the German

radio channel Südwestrundfunk (SWR, formerly SDR and SWF) in Baden-Baden, Germany (collection of manuscripts, Bender's correspondence with the relevant editors, and recordings of the radio and television programs) regarding Bender's media relations. With regard to radio broadcasting, in the archives there are thirty programs which Bender was significantly involved in; with regards to television, there are eighteen programs.

[4] Eberhard Bauer, "Parapsychologie für wen?," in *Spektrum der Parapsychologie: Hans Bender zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Eberhard Bauer and Walter von Lucadou (Freiburg: Aurum Verlag, 1983), 42.

[5] See Sylvia Paletschek and Anna Lux, "Okkultismus in der Moderne: Zwischen Wissenschaft, Religion und Unterhaltung," *Historische Anthropologie* 21, no. 3 (2013): 315–23.

[6] Thomas F. Gieryn, "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interest in Professional Ideologies of Scientists," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 6 (1983): 791.

[7] Ina Schmied-Knittel, *Satanismus und ritueller Missbrauch: Eine wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2008); Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); Simone Natale, "Geisterglaube, Unterhaltung und Showgeschäft im 19. Jahrhundert," *Historische Anthropologie* 21, no. 3 (2013): 324–42.

[8] In her book, *Paranormal Media,* she analyzed how audiences interacted and participated in paranormal phenomena, especially in the media age (in movies and photography, with ghost cams, ghost hunting events, and live medium demonstration on TV). Annette Hill, *Paranormal Media: Audiences, Spirits and Magic in Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2011).

[9] Sabine Doering-Manteuffel, *Das Okkulte: Eine Erfolgsgeschichte im Schatten der Aufklärung. Von Gutenberg bis zum World Wide Web* (Munich: Siedler, 2008).

[10] Gerhard Mayer, *Phantome-Wunder-Sensationen: Das Übersinnliche in der Presseberichterstattung* (Sandhausen: Gesellschaft f. Anomalistik, 2004).

[11] Peter Weingart, ed., *Wissenschaft der Öffentlichkeit: Essays zum Verhältnis von Wissenschaft, Medien und Öffentlichkeit* (Weilerswist: Velbrück, 2005).

[12] Sybilla Nikolow and Arne Schirrmacher, "Das Verhältnis von Wissenschaft und Öffentlichkeit als Beziehungsgeschichte: Historiographische und systematische Perspektiven," in *Wissenschaft und Öffentlichkeit als Ressourcen füreinander: Studien zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte in 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Nikolow and Schirrmacher (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2007), 11.

[13] The authors of the intensely discussed book *Re-Thinking Science* classify, by way of example, particle physics as being a discipline of "weak contextualization" whereas molecular biology is one of "strong contextualization." This "'strong contextualization' occurs when researchers have the opportunity, and in particular, *are willing*, to respond to signals received from society. . . . It is important to emphasize that 'strong contextualization' not only shapes research agendas and its priorities, but also influences research topics and methods." Helga Nowotny, Peter Scott, and Michael Gibbons, *Re-Thinking Science: Knowledge and the Public in an Age of Uncertainty* (Oxford: Polity, 2001), 131.

[14] Stefan Böschen, "Science Assessment: Eine Perspektive der Demokratisierung von Wissenschaft," in *Wissenschaft zwischen Folgeverantwortung und Nichtwissen: Aktuelle Perspektiven der Wissenschaftsforschung*, ed. Stefan Böschen and Peter Wehling (Wiesbaden: Verlag f. Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), 107–82.

[15] Hans Bender, *Unser sechster Sinn: Hellsehen, Telepathie, Spuk* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1974), 29.

[16] Concerning Bender's biography see Eberhard Bauer, "Hans Bender: 'Frontier Scientist'—A Personal Tribute," *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 58 (1991), 124–27; Elmar R. Gruber, *Suche im Grenzenlosen: Hans Bender. Ein Leben für die Parapsychologie* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1993).

[17] Hans Bender, *Psychische Automatismen: Zur Experimentalpsychologie des Unterbewußten und der außersinnlichen Wahrnehmung* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1936).

[18] Seymour H. Mauskopf and Michael R. McVaugh, *The Elusive Science: Origins of Experimental Psychical Research* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 131–68.

[19] In 1939, Bender obtained his medical license and doctorate in medicine. However, the procedure for the latter was apparently not legally completed. Bender nevertheless kept the title "Dr. med." for years following, which provoked a media scandal in the 1970s. Subsequently, Bender obtained his doctorate in 1980.

[20] Hans Bender, "Experimentelle Visionen: Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Sinnestäuschung, des Realitätsbewusstseins und der Schichten der Persönlichkeit" (Habilitation, University of Bonn, 1941). This work was not published.

[21] Concerning Benders time in Strasbourg, see Frank-Rutger Hausmann, *Hans Bender (1907–1991) und das "Institut für Psychologie und Klinische Psychologie" an der Reichsuniversität Straßburg 1941–1944* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2006).

[22] Uwe Schellinger, Andreas Anton, and Michael Schetsche, "Zwischen Scientismus und Okkultismus. Grenzwissenschaftliche Experimente der deutschen Marine im Zweiten Weltkrieg," *Zeitschrift für Anomalistik* 19 (2010): 287–321.

[23] Karin Orth, "Forschungsförderung durch die Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft bis 1970," in *Die Freiburger Philosophische Fakultät*, ed. Eckhard Wirbelauer (Freiburg-Munich: Alber, 2006), 708.

[24] Eberhard Bauer and Walter von Lucadou, "Parapsychologie in Freiburg: Versuch einer Bestandsaufnahme," *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie* 29 (1987): 241–82.

[25] In the course of restructuring, after Mischo's retirement, the professorship was transformed into a chair post, the chair for pedagogical psychology.

[26] See Ina Dietzsch, "'Volkskunde für unser Geld?': Wissenschaft als Projekt in Zusammenarbeit mit verschiedenen Öffentlichkeiten," in Nikolow and Schirrmacher, eds., *Wissenschaft und Öffentlichkeit*, 179–96; Christina Wessely, "Koalitionen des Nichtwissens? Welteislehre, akademische Naturwissenschaften und der Kampf um die öffentliche Meinung, 1895–1945," in Nikolow and Schirrmacher, eds., *Wissenschaft und Öffentlichkeit*, 225–244.

[27] Stacy Horn, *Unbelievable: Investigations into Ghosts, Poltergeists, Telepathy, and Other Unseen Phenomena, from the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 50.

[28] Bender, *Psychische Automatismen*, VI.

[29] Kurt Schmidt, "Die ersten Hellsehversuche an einer deutschen Universität: Unterstützt von der Notgemeinschaft der deutschen Wissenschaft," *B.Z. am Mittag*, July 11, 1935. Similar articles were published in other journals. See IGPP archive, repository 10/5.

[30] Hans Bender, "Zum Problem der außersinnlichen Wahrnehmung: Ein Beitrag zur Untersuchung des 'räumlichen Hellsehens' mit Laboratoriumsmethoden," *Zeitschrift für Psychologie* 135 (1935): 20–130.

[31] Schmidt, "Die ersten Hellsehversuche."

[32] Hans Bender, "Hellsehen unter der Lupe der Wissenschaft: Die Untersuchungen Dr. Benders im Psychologischen Institut der Universität Bonn," *Völkischer Beobachter*, *Norddeutsche Ausgabe*, July 13, 1935.

[33] Bender wrote in a letter with regard to a "storm of reporters" on the Bonner Institute: "I rejected the people, with the exception of the 'Kölnische Zeitung' . . . and of the 'Völkischer Beobachter,' which was requesting a statement by phone, for which I had about an hour of time." Letter from Bender to Hans Hennig, Danzig, July 26, 1935, in: IGPP archive, repository 10/5, A/II/48: Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz A–Z, Bonn 1935/36, not numbered.

[34] This campaign against Bender was initiated in the Brandenburg region by local representatives of the Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda and the National Socialist's Peoples Welfare (NSV). The NSV was a NSDAP organization and responsible for the party's welfare policy. It's social welfare commitment played an important role in strengthening the ties within the racially and ideologically defined *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community) and furthered the propagation of the National Socialist ideology.

[35] Basis for the following analysis is the collection of press notices concerning the event at the IGPP archive, repository 10/5.

[36] This is the subheading of the article "Gegen den Okkultismus," *Magdeburgische Zeitung*, Juli 19, 1935.

[37] On the basis of the official press statement, associated articles were published in different newspapers in the following days. See press collection at the IGPP archive, repository 10/5.

[38] "Hellsehen unter der Lupe der Wissenschaft: Führende Forscher bestreiten die Beweiskraft der Untersuchungen Dr. Benders," *Völkischer Beobachter*, Juli 18, 1935.

[39] "Hellsehen unter der Lupe."

[40] "My laboratory experiments are exclusively intended for the scientific discipline and require . . . numerous confirmations as well as continuous verification. That they were published in the press, was without my consent. . . . When I concern myself with the problems of parapsychology as a scientist in the laboratory, aside from seeking purely scientific results, I additionally and emphatically strive to clarify and warn against misuse and mischief . . . and [I] want to emphasize that my work cannot be taken and publicly portrayed as a proof of clairvoyance in the popular sense." Press notice by Hans Bender, as cited in Hans Bender, "Gegen Aberglaube und Okkultismus: Die Hellsehversuche im Psychologischen Institut

der Universität Bonn. Eine Erklärung Dr. Benders," *Bonner Generalanzeiger*, July 20, 1935.

[41] Carl Graf von Klinckowstroem, "Hellsehen und Schwindel," *Königsberger Tageblatt*, August 30, 1935; Leonhard von Renthe-Fink, "Forschung und Aufklärung: Eine Bitte im Interesse der Wissenschaft," *Duisburger Generalanzeiger*, August 14, 1935.

[42] Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

[43] Hans Bender to Erich Rudolf Jaensch, October 27, 1935, in: IGPP archive, repository 10/5, A/II/48: Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz A–Z, Bonn 1935/36, unnumbered.

[44] Hubert Knoblauch, *Populäre Religion: Auf dem Weg in eine spirituelle Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verlag, 2009).

[45] See Maren Hartmann and Andreas Hepp, eds., *Die Mediatisierung der Alltagswelt* (Wiesbaden: Verlag f. Sozialwissenschaften, 2010). In contrast to those writings, Weingart focuses on the relation between the public and science. He defines medialization as a linking of science to mass media as a mutual process: on the one hand the change in the presentation of science in the mass media, on the other hand the attempts of the scientific community to adapt to the modes of selection and presentation, to strengthen the social justification through preferable positive coverage. Weingart, *Wissenschaft der Öffentlichkeit*, 10–11, 28.

[46] Hans Bender, "Der Okkultismus als Problem der Psychohygiene," *Neue Wissenschaft* 1, no. 3 (1950): 35.

[47] Reinhard Fatke, "Psychohygiene und Pädagogik," in *Die Psychologie des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Vol. 12, *Konsequenzen für die Pädagogik*, Walter Spiel, ed. (Zürich: Kindler, 1980), 736–37.

[48] The existence of a second advice center from 1989 onward supported the success of this approach. It was called *Parapsychologische Beratungsstelle* (Parapsychological Counseling Center), located in Freiburg and managed by Walter von Lucadou, a student of Bender. It was subsidized also by funds from the German federal state Baden-Württemberg.

[49] His fee for radio contributions for example, was directly transferred to the IGPP's bank account. See the correspondence between Bender and the responsible editors of the SWR, for example Bender's letter to Horst Krüger from August 20, 1955, in: SWR Historisches Archiv Baden-Baden, P 01 776 (Korrespondenz B, 1955–57).

[50] See "Hans Bender im Gespräch mit Johannes Mischo," in Bauer and Lucadou, *Spektrum der Parapsychologie*, 15.

[51] "Dein sechster Sinn," in *Bild*, January 20, 1967.

[52] The controversial "electronic voice phenomenon" refers to voices and noises recorded on tape, whose origin remains unexplained. In 1967, Jürgenson caused a stir with the associated book *Sprechfunk mit Verstorbenen* (Voice Radio for the Deceased), Verlag Hermann Bauer.

[53] See Eberhard Bauer and Michael Schetsche, eds., *Alltägliche Wunder: Erfahrungen mit dem Übersinnlichen—wissenschaftliche Befunde* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2003).

[54] The analysis of the *Bild* letters did not focus on social categories (age, sex, social background, religion) but rather on the paranormal experiences themselves (in respect to age and sex); the results can be found here: Erhard Hanefeld, "Erlebnisformen paranormaler Spontanfälle," *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie* 13 (1971): 95–117.

[55] Hans Bender, "Zur Nachuntersuchung des Falles Ilga K.," *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie und Charakterkunde* 58 (1940): 338.

[56] Even though there is no data (sale figures or ratings) from this time available, there are still some signs of Bender's success. Many of the thousands of letters that reached him mentioned an interview or radio broadcast with Bender as the source of their familiarity of the IGPP. Another testimony to Bender's success is the number of interviews he was requested to give and the number of inquiries regarding articles by journalists (most of them quite interested in sales figures). Hans Bender, "Zur Nachuntersuchung," 338.

[57] For an overview on popularization (by taking the example of scientific history), see Barbara Korte and Sylvia Paletschek, "Geschichte in populären Medien und Genres: Vom Historischen Roman zum Computerspiel," in *History Goes Pop: Zur Repräsentation von Geschichte in populären Medien und Genres*, ed. Barbara Korte and Sylvia Paletschek (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009), 9–60.

[58] Bender showed a lot of enthusiasm toward television and was involved in the production of shows since the mid-1950s, when TV was still in its early days. To display the array of programs that he contributed to, some of these shows shall be named: live broadcasts with the clairvoyant Croiset (1955); a show by Heinz Huber (innovative documentary film director) on astrology (1958); a "classic" panel discussion on near death experiences with experts from theology, medicine, and natural science (1981); a rather "experimental" panel discussion, in which opinions from the whole population came together and hosted a debate about the topic *Wenn die Seele Sehnsucht hat* (If the Soul Is Longing, 1984); as well as the three-part series *Psi: Berichte über das Außergewöhnliche* (Psi: Reports on the Extraordinary, 1974 and 1975).

[59] *Die Aula: Stunde der Universitäten* (The Auditorium: Lecture Hour) was a radio program by the SWF, in which professors addressed an educated audience in layman-terms. Bender was one of the particularly active contributors and gave lectures that include topics like "Occultism as Reflected in Science" (1949) and "The War as Reflected in Occult Experiences" (1957), as well as lectures about C. G. Jung (July 28, 1975).

[60] Bender published a succession of contributions or whole series of articles in illustrated magazines, for example in *Das Ufer* (1953), *Sie & Er* (1967) or *Neue Revue* (1976).

[61] According to journalist Gerhard Adler, "the doyen" succeeded to translate the "tough matter" of the subject into the language of the media. Gerhard Adler, "Die Ambivalenz des Erfolgs," in Bauer and Lucadou, *Spektrum der Parapsychologie*, 31.

[62] Martin Halter, "Der Kammerjäger des Übersinnlichen. Zum Tode des Freiburger Parapsychologen Hans Bender," *Badische Zeitung*, May 10, 1991.

[63] "Was war in Neudorf? Prof. Hans Bender berichtet über Spukphänomene. Radiogespräch vom 20. Januar 1953," broadcast by Südwestfunk.

[64] Adorno, who stated that occultism was the "metaphysics for stupid fellows" ("Metaphysik der dummen Kerle") (Theodor W. Adorno, "Thesen gegen den Okkultismus," in Adorno, *Minima Moralia* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988], 462–74), spoke on the TV program *Astrologie—Tatsachen und Meinungen* (Astrology—Facts and Opinions) on December 12, 1958.

[65] "Psi 1: Stimmen auf Tonband," TV episode, November 10, 1974.

[66] "Was war in Neudorf?"

[67] Critical articles were published for example in *Der Spiegel*, *Badische Zeitung* (that otherwise had been favorable) as well as *Die Zeit*. In addition, there were a lot of letters to the editor from viewers.

[68] Thomas F. Gieryn developed the concept of boundary-work by observing and analyzing demarcation practices of scientific disciplines which are characterized by the acquisition of intellectual authority and career opportunities, the denial of these resources to "pseudoscientists," and the protection of the autonomy of scientific research from political interference." Gieryn, "Boundary-Work," 781.

11: Beyond Good and Evil: Nazis and the Supernatural in Video Games

Jeff Hayton

> *Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look into the abyss, the abyss also looks into you.*
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Aphorism 146

The introductory cinematic from the hit video game *Wolfenstein* (Raven Software / Activision, 2009) opens aboard the Nazi warship *Tirpitz* in the dead of night, five miles off the British coast, as it prepares to rain death down upon sleeping England. As warning bells signal that missile launch is imminent, Nazi soldiers run toward a general standing with his back to them, shouting that an American spy is on board. When a soldier notices dripping blood, the jig is up: the "general" is none other than Special Agent B. J. Blazkowicz, sent to stop the Nazis. While the hero of the story quickly dispatches his startled foes, an alarm is sounded and, following a heart-pounding chase, Blazkowicz is cornered and reluctantly raises his hands. An officer appears and, noticing an eerie glow emanating from Blazkowicz's coat pocket, demands the protagonist show him the strange light. Blazkowicz slowly pulls out what players later learn is a mysterious Thule medallion, an artifact created by the ancient Thule society that allows holders to harness power from an alternative realm, the Black Sun dimension. As the Nazis open fire, the medallion suddenly flashes, and blue waves of energy explode outward, enveloping the enemies and turning them to dust. Explosions begin to rip through the *Tirpitz* as the dynamite Blazkowicz has set goes off and the ship begins to sink. The cut scene fades to black with Blazkowicz, who has narrowly escaped by plane, staring intently at the now quiet Thule medallion, and radioing his superiors at the Office of Secret Actions with the urgent message, "Wake up the director, tell him we have to meet as soon as I land."

Thus begins an action adventure that sends players to the fictional city of Isenstadt, deep within Nazi Germany, where they must stop the evil General Victor Zetta and the mad scientist Wilhelm "Deathshead" Strasse, who are trying to exploit the black arts in an attempt to secure

victory for the Third Reich—one of many such video games that have appeared over the years. The connection between the supernatural and the Nazis has been a mainstay of popular culture for decades. From American comics in the 1940s and 1950s (*Captain America*, 1941–), to Italian and American exploitation cinema in the 1960s and 1970s (*Ilsa, She Wolf of the SS*, 1975), to mainstream film in the 1980s and 1990s (*Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*, 1981), to video games in the new millennium (*Wolfenstein: The New Order*, 2014), Nazi efforts at harnessing the paranormal has a long history. But what is the significance of such representations of the past? What do we learn about Nazism, about the supernatural, about history—about ourselves—through such a historical reimaging?

These are important questions because even as scholarly study has transformed our understanding of the Nazi phenomenon by elucidating its nuances, the Nazi of popular culture has almost universally remained a one-dimensional caricature of pure malevolence.[1] But what is fascinating about Nazi wickedness in popular culture is that genocide—Nazism's historic evil—is rarely acknowledged. Instead, deviant sexuality, mad science, and the pursuit of the irrational have usually accounted for Nazism's moral blackness. Instead of complex dynamics rooted in historical experiences, these artifacts of popular culture instead suggest that the supernatural or the occult "explain" Nazism. In this chapter, I explore why the supernatural has been mobilized by video games featuring Nazism, how these digital reconstructions have done so, and what the consequences of such an instrumentalization are by studying the role of the fantastic in video games featuring Nazis over the past few decades.

Examining how video games mobilize Nazism is pressing because the medium has the ability to reach millions with an easily digestible—if thoroughly invented—representation of the past. Video games have now replaced film as the preeminent visual consumer product of the twenty-first century. In 2008, the video game industry surpassed film as the global media leader in sales, and in 2013, it generated $66 billion in revenues.[2] According to the video game industry's marketing and promotions organization, the Entertainment Software Association, 58% of Americans play video games, and this number is rising.[3] Video games now cost hundreds of millions of dollars to produce and can generate billions in revenue: it took the recent *Grand Theft Auto V* (Rockstar Games / Take-Two Interactive, 2013) a mere *three days* to reach $1 billion in sales, the fastest-selling media product in history.[4] Video games have traditionally relied upon the Second World War and National Socialism for subject matter. Many of the most popular video games, such as the *Medal of Honor* or *Call of Duty* franchises, have historically featured storylines and action in which a (good) hero has fought and killed an endless number of (evil) Nazis: as of November 2011, for example, the *Call of Duty* series

had sold over one hundred million copies.[5] While there is an enormous amount of scholarship on the relationship of film, art, and literature to Nazism, there is next to nothing on that of video games—an unfortunate omission, since these digital artifacts have the potential to reach millions with a mass-marketed vision of history that demands investigation.

Such reach is important in explaining why and how certain images remain foregrounded in our popular consciousness. But this also raises weighty questions: What are the consequences for our understanding of history when digital representations of Nazism boast a bevy of witches, undead, and the paranormal? And what are the ramifications for our comprehension of the past when using the supernatural to "explain" Nazism? In this chapter, I examine how video games have wed history with the supernatural, and the consequences of that fusion. Tracking a number of games over the past three decades, I explore how these digital artifacts confront the Nazi past. By interrogating the relationship between the supernatural and National Socialism, I illuminate how video games help to shape and reinforce popular notions of Nazism, for in mobilizing the occult to help "explain" Nazism, video games shift the historic evil of the Third Reich from genocide to the supernatural. In so doing, video games work to perpetuate tenuous historical connections, which reduce Nazi transgression to the magical rather than the real, a process which I suggest has significant ramifications for our contemporary understanding of the Holocaust.

History, Genre, and Nazism

The first video games to feature Nazis were war games simulating the battlefields of the Second World War. Since the eighteenth century, war games have been used to simulate military situations by state officials, and the use of board games to replicate armed conflict stretches back at least to the twelfth century.[6] Major conflicts throughout recent history, such as the 1941 German invasion of the Soviet Union, have been gamed ahead of time to help refine operational tactics.[7] Likewise since the 1950s, simulations and board games have been used educationally in schools to help teach diverse skills, such as corporate management in business simulations to career decision-making in board games like *Life Career*.[8] The computer war games that began appearing in the 1990s as such originate in this long line of educational and military simulations.[9] These games were often carbon copies of older paper-and-dice war game simulations produced by companies like Avalon Hill and Simulations Publications that allowed enthusiasts to "refight" renowned encounters, such as the Battle of Stalingrad or the Battle of Britain.[10] Except, instead of paper counters that players moved gingerly around a map spread out on a dining-room table, computer screens were filled with digitized icons signifying units

that players ordered around the pixilated battlefield. Games like *V for Victory* (Atomic Games / Three-Sixty Pacific, 1993), *World at War: Stalingrad* (Avalon Hill / Atomic Games, 1994) and *Steel Panthers* (SSI / Mindscape, 1995) quickly became popular among the war gaming public. These early video games mark not so much a qualitative leap in the historical imaginary from the older paper-and-dice games, but rather a quantitative one due to the ease with which computers were able to handle the complex rules and calculations that govern war games and the ability to combine multiple scenarios into full campaigns.[11]

Representative of these games is the 5-Star series released by Strategic Simulations, Inc. in the 1990s, especially the cult classic *Panzer General* (1994). Commanding the German side in the Second World War, *Panzer General* reimagines the war as a series of lightning campaigns that emphasizes freedom of movement and audacious action beginning with the blitzkrieg across Poland and France in 1939–40, continuing with the defeat of both Britain and the Soviet Union, and ending with a hypothetical invasion of the United States. However, instead of fighting as Nazis, players fight (play) as Germans, a decision denying the historical specificity of the Third Reich with all the political and racial particularities that such a shift entails. Though the Second World War frames this conflict, the narrative is profoundly ahistorical: there is no hint as to why nations, such as France and England, fight side by side against Germany; there is no difference between playing the Germans or the British except for a change of icon color and access to different equipment; the German side is never referred to as the Nazis and the swastika is noticeably absent with the iron cross taking its place. Even though the setting is the Second World War, the ideology, the popular mobilization—indeed, the politics—that defined the conflict are erased in favor of clarity: war is instead an intractable (if natural) contest between states, not individuals, either in the trenches or on the home front. That players cannot achieve a place in history by making peace but solely by vanquishing foes only further reinforces this point, as does the fact that the invader is privileged as the maker of history: it is up to players, as Germans, to achieve a place in history since the defender is merely acted upon, a passive subject in history.[12] The game interface only adds to this narrative, as the screen is a giant map subdivided in hexes occupied by players' troops, whom they move around authoritatively with a click of the mouse.

Games like *Panzer General* are legion and represent a stylized appropriation of Nazism, part of the larger myth about the "clean" *Wehrmacht* and idolization of figures like Guderian, Manstein, and Rommel that dominated popular Anglo-American understanding of the war after 1945.[13] Rather than portray the ideological impetus that drove the Nazi war of annihilation, these games replaced it with a sanitized understanding of war that posited a natural conflict between states—a conflict bereft

of ambiguity and moral complications. In part this transformation is a reflection of the war gaming public's singular focus on the purely military dimensions to the conflict and on the desire to play (fight) as perhaps history's most effective and successful army. In this, the battlefields in these games are uncluttered, a conflict between two distinctly visible sides. The enemy is easily identifiable with a different icon color, and there are no civilians or third parties to complicate matters. Once American surrender has been secured, the game assures players, "The world is at peace. Your brilliant leadership throughout this war ranks you among the greatest generals that have ever lived, and you will be remembered." But in so doing, these games drain the Third Reich of Nazism; the Nazis in videogame war simulations are transmogrified into worthy adversaries engaged in hard but honorable warfare—myths that scholars have spent the last decades demolishing.[14]

But since the 1990s, another breed of digital Nazi has appeared onscreen and in many ways has replaced the former as the image of the popular Nazi. In the early 1980s, MUSE Software produced two hit games for the Apple II—*Castle Wolfenstein* (1981) and *Beyond Castle Wolfenstein* (1984)—which revolutionized the digital representation of Nazism. In both games, players control an American soldier that must defeat the Nazis single-handedly. In the first, as a captured US private in Castle Wolfenstein, players must steal the Nazis' secret war plans and escape undetected. In the second, players enter the Führer's Berlin bunker, locate a bomb hidden by "The Underground," and plant it outside a conference room where Hitler is haranguing his generals. These games traffic in historical fact, which adds legitimacy to these fanciful narratives, and one cannot help but recognize the July 1944 bomb plot, Hitler's tirade-filled general staff meetings, and Himmler's Castle Wewelsburg in the plots and settings of these games. Featuring top-down views, these games emphasize stealth—players have limited ammunition, and disguise remains a primary objective—as the protagonist moves from screen to screen in a maze-like environment crawling with Nazi guards. In this sense, these games were a bridge between the table-top board games, which remained loosely grounded in military-historical—if sometimes counterfactual—reality, and the supernatural Nazi games that were to come. But the depiction of evil Nazis rather than worthy adversaries and the use of a single heroic protagonist were signal developments.

While MUSE Software soon folded, the Wolfenstein concept was appropriated by the programmers at id Software, who revolutionized the gaming industry with the release of their classic first-person shooter (FPS) *Wolfenstein 3D* (1992), a release that critics consider the birth of the modern age of video games.[15] John Romero and John Carmack designed a world in which players wander a maze of rooms and kill an

endless stream of Nazis and their German shepherd dogs.[16] En route to killing Hitler, players must destroy countless mutants created by the evil Dr. Schabbs and the mad scientist Otto Giftmacher (poison-maker), who were developing chemical weapons to gas the Allies. A prequel, *Spear of Destiny* (Apogee / id Software, 1992), was quickly developed in which protagonist B. J. Blazkowicz was required to return to Castle Wolfenstein and steal the mythical Spear of Destiny (used to pierce Christ on the cross), which the Nazis were using to raise the dead. While historical referents again legitimize these games (gas, medical experimentation, and a mustachioed Hitler), in contrast to the earlier games, id Software's Nazis were unabashedly evil. Engaged in a host of nefarious deeds from genetic experimentation to chemical weaponry to crimes against humanity (the environment was full of torture cells filled with bones), players must destroy hordes of Nazis without remorse.

In part, the genre itself was responsible. Both games used the first-person perspective to immerse gamers more fully into the digital environment, a shift which revolutionized the gaming industry. Instead of looking down (top-down view), players see through the protagonist's eyes and move in a three-dimensional world with a weapon at the bottom of the screen to maintain orientation. While the top-down, two-dimensional perspective keeps players at a distance, first-person or third-person (behind the shoulder) perspectives immerse players more deeply into the digital environment as scholars acknowledge, even if they do not agree on the specifics of such immersion.[17] These feelings of immersion were intensified dramatically by the gameplay that necessitated players to kill Nazis. FPSs operate on a dynamic in which the sole objective is to kill as many enemies as possible which in turn advances the plot as players complete levels. In the id Software games, players—instead of sneaking away as in the MUSE Software games—need to kill the Nazis who populate the digital environments. While players could complete certain levels by simply running away from the Nazis (though not the "boss" battles against Hitler, Schabbs, Giftmacher, etc.), as the developers have often suggested, the entire point was to kill Nazis.[18] Emphasizing action over narrative, id Software's games were nonstop thrill rides as players mowed down Nazis with a sense of embodiment that until then games had not be able to offer, part of the explanation for their enormous success. Nor was this by accident, as one of id Software's primary objectives was to create as fast a game as possible, even sacrificing more advanced graphics that would slow down the games.[19] And by authorizing the annihilation of an army of evil Nazis, id Software's games hit upon the ultimate adversary. These developments, on the technological, narrative, and content level, converged in the Nazi supernatural games of the past two decades, a subject to which we now turn.

The Supernatural, Medium, and Nazism

Part of what makes FPSs featuring Nazis so successful is the Manichean world they imagine. FPSs function best when they pit a righteous hero against an unredeemable foe, because gamers need to overcome the morally reprehensible fact that as players, they must kill countless enemies en route to victory. Many of the most successful games have featured unequivocal enemies: demons from hell (the *Doom* franchise); invading aliens from outer space (the *Halo* games); and Nazis. The best-selling FPSs in the past two decades all feature Nazis as adversaries, such as in the *Medal of Honor* or *Call of Duty* franchises that began as Second World War games, though they are now moving toward more contemporary settings, especially the war on terror (for some, another irredeemable foe). FPSs function as a crusade since the majority of game play involves players killing scores of antagonists, which necessitates the use of an inherently evil enemy to provide moral justification for mass slaughter. In this way, the use of the Second World War as the setting for game play and Nazis as adversaries works well because it mobilizes the historic victory of the Allies to justify the action, and pits virtuous heroes against cruel and implacable foes.[20] Indeed, the FPS genre is critical in this regard since players can only play a "good" protagonist who must kill evil Nazis, thereby removing any hint of moral ambivalence from the historic Allied victory. That players are effectively immortal in FPSs—if players do die, they can simply reload their game to an earlier saved point—and enemies die by the hundreds if not thousands only reinforces this good–evil duality.[21] And while the historic evil of Nazism remains the mobilizing force authorizing the story and action—genocide remains the reason why the Nazis are malevolent—the Holocaust remains unspoken and unrepresented, partially because it is in fact players who commit genocide in these games. While I will discuss the consequences of eliding the destruction of European Jewry in video games featuring Nazis below, the inability of these games to depict genocide means that they must account for why the Nazis are so evil, the reason why they turn to the supernatural.

As the many chapters in this collection suggest, the Nazi-supernatural connection has a long history based tenuously in fact and more in myth, a relationship that games featuring Nazis over the past decade have exploited to authenticate their stories, inspire graphical imagery, and drive game play. In *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* (Gray Matter Studios / Activision, 2001), players must stop "Deathshead" from fashioning an army of "Super Soldiers" (*Übersoldaten*) and other mutants twisted by metal and electricity, as well as SS High Priestess Marianna Blavatsky, who seeks to raise the long-dead tenth-century Saxon king Heinrich I. In *ÜberSoldier* (Burut CT / CDV, 2006), players control Karl Stolz, a recently killed *Wehrmacht* soldier resurrected by Dr. Ernst Schäfer

through a mystical Thule technique discovered during a Nazi expedition to Tibet. Freed from prison by a member of the German Resistance, Stolz must stop the Nazi T9 program, which is bringing back Nazi soldiers to life as "ÜberSoldiers": invincible warrior-zombies with supernatural powers. In *BloodRayne* (Terminal Reality / Majesco Games, 2003), protagonist Rayne, a half-vampire member of the secretive Brimstone Society, which seeks to rid the world of vampires, must stop Jürgen Wulf, head of *Gegengeist Gruppe* (Antispirit Division), and the Nazis from reconstructing the scattered body parts of the devil Beliar—the mythical king of the Aryan race on Atlantis—as a means of bringing Hitler to power and achieving immortality.

While the stories remain fantastic, these games nonetheless trade in historical actualities to authorize game play. *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, for example, models Marianna Blavatsky on the nineteenth-century Russian occultist Helena Blavatsky and Himmler's obsession with Henry the Fowler.[22] *ÜberSolider* utilizes the 1938–39 anthropological expedition to Tibet, headed by Dr. Ernst Schäfer under the auspices of *SS-Ahnenerbe* (Institute for Ancestral Heritage), and the T4 euthanasia program (except this time Germans are being resurrected rather than killed).[23] *BloodRayne*, meanwhile, borrows the myth of Atlantis as the ancestral home of the Aryans, a claim circulated by the occultist and *völkisch* Thule Society during the early Weimar years.[24] Like the "Nazi Mysteries" fiction, which proliferated during the 1960s and 1970s, these games utilize tenuous historical realities in order to justify content and form, even if they are distorted beyond belief.[25] Furthermore, as these plot outlines suggest, they all follow a fairly predictable narrative structure. In almost all of them, the Nazis are attempting to tap into the unknown in an attempt to overcome worldly obstacles, which in turn endanger the known world. As David Skal and Andrew Tudor have argued, "science gone awry" is a familiar trope of cinema, and video games featuring Nazis replicate these plot structures digitally.[26] In what Tudor defines as a "knowledge narrative," the antagonist pursues forbidden knowledge often existing between the known and the unknown world. This introduces disorder into the realm of the living, which then must be defeated by the protagonist in order to restore balance to the world.[27] From the 1930s to the 1950s, the "Frankenstein paradigm" dominated horror and science fiction films, and while in classic mad-scientist cinema the antagonist usually pursued such knowledge naively in search of bettering humanity or without fully comprehending the consequences of unfettered scientific pursuit, Nazi pursuit of the supernatural is done nefariously with the destruction of humanity as its final objective.[28] Thus, video games depict Nazis engaging in genetic engineering in *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, tapping into mystical Eastern power in *ÜberSoldier*, or harnessing the power of the demonic in *BloodRayne*, all with the goal of enslaving or annihilating the human race.

With the fantastic replacing the historic evil of genocide, the supernatural substitutes to "explain" Nazism. In the era of classic horror and science fiction cinema, the "science gone awry" plot traced its heritage back into the nineteenth century but was given contemporary significance with the detonation of the atomic bomb in 1945. Similarly, in video games featuring Nazis, genetic engineering plays a dominant role in these storylines with doctors using the supernatural or the occult to transform humanity into monsters. These games duly reference the historic "scientific" experimentation that the Nazis conducted, most infamously with concentration camp inmates at Auschwitz by Dr. Josef Mengele.[29] In fact, a number of games have a "Mengele" stand-in: In *ÜberSoldier*, Dr. Schäfer is creating an army of super soldiers for his organization *ÜberMacht*, while in *Wolfenstein 3D*, Dr. Schabbs is raising an army of undead mutants. *BloodRayne* goes beyond stand-ins by creating a direct familial relative in the person of Dr. Bathory Mengele, the so-called Butcheress or Blood Countess, who transforms humans into demonic creatures.

Nazi video games often end in the fantastical with humans transformed into mutants or robots, such as the slug-like creature that General Zetta becomes after too much exposure to the Black Sun dimension in *Wolfenstein* or the half-man bounding "Lopers," whose lower half has been replaced by electrical currents, which populate certain levels in *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*. These monster often break free of their enclosures and kill Nazi scientists. Indeed, the trope of "Icarus flying to close to the sun," in which the Nazis are punished for experimenting with the unknown, is a recurrent feature in these games, commentary suggesting that human and scientific interests may in fact be divergent.[30] In *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, head of SS Paranormal Division Helga von Bulow is killed by the monster Olaric after she uses an ancient Thule artifact, the "Dagger of Warding," to awaken it, while in the climax to *BloodRayne*, the devil Beliar immediately turns on Wulf after being summoned by him. These games even legitimize Nazi "science" to a degree. In *BloodRayne*, where players must kill the twins Sigmund and Simon who were separated at birth, attacking one injures the other and vice-versa—the kind of pseudoscience that Mengele pursued in his "work" on twins. These themes all follow the conventions of the mad-scientist film genre in suggesting that uncontrolled knowledge should not be toyed with, a standard commentary in horror and science fiction films. However, by elevating genetic engineering as the objective of Nazi nefariousness, these video games suggest that Nazi evil is not genocide but the perversion of the human body.

In fact, the body as a site of deviance is continually emphasized in video games featuring Nazis. From the bulbous, infected humans in an early level of *BloodRayne*, to the grotesquely deformed mutants in *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, to the zombies in *ÜberSoldier*, the body is used as

a register of Nazi evil. In *Wolfenstein*, for example, the majority of adversaries encountered have been "augmented" or "modified" with Tesla-energy coils or invasive surgery. As such, the "Ungesehen" (the Unseen) are invisible killers whose mechanical grafting procedure has driven them insane, and the "Super Soldiers" are hulks of metal and flesh. The corruption of the body by Nazi scientific experimentation is thus an index of moral blackness, as is the flesh's tampering with inorganic matter, whether electrical current or metallic implants.

Nor is the perverted body the sole sign of wickedness, as deviant sexuality is equally an indicator of Nazi evil. In video games featuring Nazis, women are continually fetishized as objects of both sexual desire and danger. In *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, SS-Paranormal—an elite occult squad under the command of Blavatsky that is "reportedly bound together as part of a witch's coven," according to the game manual—is decked out in tight-leather catsuits and sky-high stilettos; when players confront Blavatsky in the final battle, the SS High Priestess is wearing a cape and little else. In *BloodRayne*, the "Blood Countess" is depicted as a buxom-beauty whose half-open uniform would have made Hitler blush (though she does wear a surgical mask to protect against bacterial infections), while the protagonist herself wears a skimpy leather outfit, knee high boots, and a barely there bustier to go with the giant swords she wields to carve up Nazis. The outfit that Rayne wears is an exception since protagonists in FPSs are almost always a fit and muscular man wearing khakis or a uniform; however, this can be accounted by the fact that she is both a half-vampire (and thus not human) and a woman (and thus not a typical video game hero).[31] And while the objectification of women is historically par for the course in video games, since young men are the most important demographic for the industry, by associating sexuality with the Third Reich, these games suggest that Nazi evil is related to body perversion and sexual deviance.[32] Nonenemy women whom players encounter are by contrast rarely depicted as sexual beings with the exception of the lingerie-clad prostitutes encountered in *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*. Usually, gamers encounter stout waitresses in dirndls, fatigue-wearing resistance fighters, or cowering secretaries in contrast with SS-Paranormal in their dominatrix outfits or the half-naked "Butcheress." Video games featuring Nazis thus traffic in imagery equating deviant sexuality and bodily perversion with evilness.

The sexualization of the Nazis that plays up the sadomasochism dimension has a long history in popular culture. Susan Sontag famously condemned such sexualized representations of Nazism in her influential essay "Fascinating Fascism," which argued that Nazi ideology had been folded into erotic aesthetics.[33] By calling attention to modified bodies and deviant sexuality, video games featuring Nazis rearticulate the conventions of exploitation cinema, especially the Nazisploitation genre.[34]

Playing up some of the more salacious rumors about the Third Reich, Nazisploitation was an Italian-American film genre that flourished briefly in the 1960s and 1970s before laws governing pornography were used to restrict its distribution. An underground genre, films such as Sergio Garrone's *Lager SSadis Kastrat Kommandanteur* (SS Experiment Camp, 1976) or Cesare Canevari's *L'ultima orgia del III Reich* (The Gestapo's Last Orgy, 1976) gained notoriety because they mixed tenuous historical trivia, campy-dialogue and gory-special effects with soft-core pornography. In *Ilsa: She-Wolf of the SS*, the titular lead character is a camp commandant conducting sadistic scientific experiments on her prisoners to prove that women can endure more pain than men and thus should be allowed to fight in the army; by night, Ilsa rapes prisoners while attempting to satisfy her voracious sexual appetite but is always disappointed and has her victims castrated and put to death. Nazisploitation films played loosely with the themes of "medical experimentation," deviant sexuality, and sadomasochist relationships, which video games featuring Nazis likewise mobilize.

One means video games distinguish between perversion and decency is through the motif of resistance. As Manichean contests between good and evil, players are aided against the Nazis by a variety of nonplayer characters (NPCs) who help protagonists defeat the enemy. In almost every game, there is an "opposition" working against the Nazis: in *Wolfenstein*, it is the Kreisau Circle; in *ÜberSoldier* it is an unnamed "German Resistance"; and in *BloodRayne*, it is the Brimstone Society. These games mobilize the historical legitimacy of actual resistance groups in order to authenticate their storylines: thus the Kreisau Circle in the *Wolfenstein* games—"an extensive resistance network of paramilitary fighter[s] and informants," as the game manual informs players—in no way resembles the rather small number of aristocratic German nationalists in resistance groups.[35] The use of resistance to the Nazis is problematic even though it helps to legitimate the Nazi-supernatural connection. These opposition groups are painted as "good Germans" in contrast to "evil Nazis," a binary whose existence underwrites the moral order of gameplay. In these games, "good" NPCs cannot die (bullets pass through them), or if they do, players must restart levels such as if you shoot friendly NPCs in *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*; triumph, in this way, is bereft of tragedy or moral ambiguity. Similarly, the use of secret societies plotting to overthrow the Nazis reinforces the Nazi-occult axis. In *Wolfenstein*, for example, players must make contact with the Golden Dawn, a group of occult scholars who are studying the ancient Thule and the Black Sun dimension, and who are modelled on the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century occult society known as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.[36] With little relation to the actual occult order briefly associated with Aleister Crowley other than borrowing its name to establish its bona

fides, the *Wolfenstein* Golden Dawn is trying to stop the Nazis and even helps to destroy the portal leading to the alternate universe—the ultimate supernatural sacrifice—rather than let the Nazis win.

The graphic architecture of video games featuring Nazis mobilize these conventions as they oscillate between the medieval past and the technology-driven future, historical cues meant to authenticate the storylines and action. Since FPSs generally have weak plots—Andrew Darley suggests they are characterized by "extraordinary poverty"—as Margit Grieb notes, they often use setting to compensate for this deficiency.[37] The digital environments that players move about are redolent with occult and supernatural imagery. Since strict laws in Germany, Russia, and other countries prohibit the display of swastikas and Nazi symbols in public, rather than lose these mass markets, video games use occult imagery or variations on Nazi signs instead.[38] In *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, the game uses a double-headed eagle that forms a *W* in Gothic script, while in *BloodRayne*, the symbol is a three-pronged swastika. Settings like castles, catacombs, tunnels, churches, sewers, and swamps all feature prominently adding to the magical architecture of the games. These locations play up stereotypical Nazi obsessions with the Middle Ages, which reinforces the occult and Nazi associations: *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* opens in AD 942 with a cinematic featuring a pagan wizard imprisoning a rampaging Heinrich I in a magical prison that SS Paranormal in 1942 is trying to free.[39] Castle Wolfenstein and Castle Gaustadt (from *BloodRayne*) are modelled historically on Himmler's Castle Wewelsburg in Westphalia near Paderborn, the center of SS occultism during the Third Reich.[40] Action—when taking place outdoors—often occurs at night, and the weather is usually stormy, which adds to the atmosphere. Game play transpiring indoors features thrones, tapestries, ornate fireplaces, banquet tables, and walls filled with fluttering Nazi flags (minus swastikas), all of which contributes to the medieval mood. Lighting and shading techniques enhance these Gothic touches by keeping environments dark, shadowy, full of sinister dread and unseen movement. In some ways this is a question of technology since darkness is easier for computers to render because it requires less detail. But in consequence, these iconic touches reinforce the Nazi-supernatural dimension as the use of the medieval, even if a product of technology and graphics nonetheless legitimizes the underlying supernatural architecture.

While the medieval predominates, futuristic flourishes continually invade these Gothic environments. These games are filled with technological "super weapons" that players must stop because they have the potential to win the war for the Nazis, a plot device trading loosely in the "wonder weapons" that Hitler and Goebbels imagined would miraculously help them win the war when all appeared lost. "Deathshead" in the *Wolfenstein* games rejects the occult in favor of experimental machines

in his search for victory, crying out during the climactic battle between Blazkowicz and his "Super Soldier," "Thus we will see the superiority of the machine over flesh and blood." In *BloodRayne*, players must control futuristic mechanized robots in their pursuit of Jürgen Wulf, while in *ÜberSoldier*, an advanced submarine must be used to sink a ship carrying the T9 medication that is used to raise the dead. While on the surface these futuristic touches would seem to negate the supernatural, they are usually not the result of technological innovation but rather unnatural knowledge. In a nod to Frankenstein, "Deathshead" uses electricity to mutate or graft metal onto flesh, and energy obtained from the Black Sun dimension is used to power a Nazi "superweapon" that can level whole cities. The use of the futuristic thereby complements the medieval in both showing how old and new knowledge is dependent upon the supernatural for activation, a process the Nazis try to exploit in the pursuit of their nefarious ends.

The Holocaust, Genre, and the Limits of Representation

Perhaps the most troubling observation about the digital representations of Nazism is the almost complete absence of the Holocaust, even if, as we have seen, the crime of genocide nonetheless justifies the mechanics of game play. While it is unproductive to catalogue how video games have inaccurately portrayed the past, what is significant are the questions that follow from such distortions. What does it mean to construct narratives and explanatory models about Nazism in which the Holocaust remains absent? How are the Nazis to be understood without genocide? Does the inability of video games to depict the Holocaust point to perhaps a more serious issue with digital media, within gaming culture—or perhaps even with popular culture itself—in representing genocide? These questions point to perhaps the most concerning consequence of the shifting of Nazi evil from genocide to the supernatural: the abandonment of the Holocaust to the neo-Nazi subculture.

Throughout the various video games, there are occasional mentions that the Nazis have committed or will commit a great crime. In *Wolfenstein 3D*, players must stop Dr. Schabbs from breeding mutants that will overrun the Allies. In *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* (EA Games, 2002), the final mission sends protagonist, American special operative Lt. Mike Powell, to Fort Schmerzen (Fort "Pain") where players are informed that something nefarious is taking place, though later players find out that it is "only" gas—meant for the Allies, not the Jews. In *Mortyr 2093–1944* (Interplay / Mirage Media, 1999), the protagonist is sent back in time from the future to stop the Nazis from tampering

with the weather because in the year 2093, having won the war and subjected the world to the Thousand-Year Reich, the Nazis have meddled too much with weather patterns and now lighting storms consume the globe (though one wonders with an observant reviewer in *Gamespot* as to why—if time-travel has been discovered—characters would not be sent back to defeat the Nazis rather than simply stop them from fiddling with the weather).[41] Yet these machinations on the whole seem rather tame when set against the historic crime of genocide, a real and very powerful crime against humanity, which has set the Nazis and other historical perpetrators of genocide beyond the pale of civilization.

Both genre and the rules of gaming play important roles in excluding genocide from video games. Since FPSs are narratives of individual triumph, the genre itself works against the depiction of Jewish destruction. Games, on a fundamental level, are meant to be won, and it is difficult to imagine how a game featuring the Holocaust can be won in an unproblematic manner, especially if the protagonist was Jewish. Much pleasure in gaming lies in inhabiting characters, investing time in their development and personality, and nothing is more ruinous to the illusion of immersion than death, especially when unavoidable: as critics maintain, frustration is highest when choice is removed from player hands.[42] And yet, inescapable destruction was the state of affairs facing the overwhelming majority of European Jews during the Second World War, and thus historical realities work against the digital depiction of genocide. One can imagine the outrage if a game allowed the converse: for gamers to play a Nazi. A few games have allowed gamers to play as "Germans" in their multiplayer platforms (though never the main individual game), which pit players against one another in contests where gamers must eliminate each other or capture an objective. But here characters encountered on the digital battlefield are only other soldiers not Jews, and in choosing the "German" side over the "French," there is no tangible difference, except uniform color and teammates, characteristics harking back to the war simulation games from the 1990s. The outrage that even these first steps toward the Holocaust has provoked suggests that a full scenario in which players must control a Nazi between 1933 and 1945, and behave as a Nazi did historically during this period (in all its shades of gray), makes the development of such a game unimaginable at the present.[43] For many, the Holocaust remains a sacred event, and to be associated with a medium privileging fun is anathema.

Furthermore, there are a host of variables that writers, programmers, and publishers must juggle in the production of video games. Perhaps the most difficult task for game designers is to create a balanced game: an environment and story that is believable, but allows for fantasy, puzzles and tasks that are demanding for players but not too demanding, and a game that ultimately is difficult but not impossible to beat. Games that

are too tricky or that feature insoluble problems can lead to frustration, disappointment, or—worst of all—abandonment. Therefore, when developing their products, designers are well aware that while players need to be challenged, they must always be able to win. An unwinnable game, is, in the end, an unplayable game. Publishers, developers, and production studios, with games now costing hundreds of millions of dollars to make, market, and distribute, need playable games. For Jews in Europe between 1933 and 1945, life was for all intents and purposes "unwinnable," because even if you miraculously survived, the losses of family, friends, dignity, and humanity meant that there were no "victors"—only survivors. These factors make "playing" European Jews during the 1930s and 1940s poor subject matter when it comes to designing a digital artifact meant to produce pleasure. In fact, it is difficult to imagine how one could construct a game around such catastrophic "losing," one of the reasons that FPSs featuring Nazis usually begin *after* 1942: because it was only after this date historically that the Allies had begun to turn the tide against the Nazis. A game set in, say, France in May 1940 would probably elicit little satisfaction from players unless they found being routed enjoyable.[44]

These concerns in the production of video games point to the deeper function of the supernatural in Nazi video games. Since it is players who are engaged in mass murder, genocide needs to be downplayed as a source of evil. But if the Holocaust cannot be represented digitally, then in order to justify the "us" versus "them" framework, another unredeemable crime must be introduced, which is why Nazis dabbling in black magic, the occult, and the supernatural has remained such a constant in video games. But the substitution of genocide for the supernatural has produced an alarming absence, and by way of conclusion, I want to end by focusing on the almost complete lack of the Holocaust in these games. While it is true that the Holocaust is absent in most video games, there is a tiny segment of the video game industry that does depict the destruction of European Jews: neo-Nazi video games. These games have existed since the 1990s, often as modified versions of mainstream video games using open-source programming, and are usually available as free downloads from neo-Nazi websites. I have not downloaded or played any of these games, such as *Ethnic Cleansing*, *Concentration Camp Rat Hunt*, or *ZOG's Nightmare* for moral reasons.[45] However, descriptions of them, their contents and plot narratives, can easily be found on the Internet and in print. In *Ethnic Cleansing*, published by the White Supremacist music label Resistance Records owned by the National Alliance and headed by William Pierce, players can choose between a Skinhead or Klansman and must run through a ghetto killing Latinos and African-Americans before entering a subway system to kill Jews. At the end, players reach the "Yiddish Control Center" where players must defeat Ariel Sharon,

former Prime Minister of Israel, who is directing plans for world domination while shouting "We have destroyed your culture!" and "We silenced Henry Ford."[46] *Concentration Camp Rat Hunt* is freely downloadable from American neo-Nazi Gerhard Lauck's website and requires players to shoot "Jewish rats" in Auschwitz.[47] *ZOG's Nightmare* was made by Jim Ramm, a former member of the National Socialist Movement, the largest "white civil rights organization" in America, and features eight levels where players kill Jews, African-Americans, and homosexuals. These games have been consistently condemned by groups like the Anti-Defamation League, though efforts to have the technology used by white supremacists to create such games restricted has been unsuccessful since the video game industry has traditionally resisted all efforts at such policing, part of its larger commitment to protecting the industry's freedom of creativity and of speech.[48]

In all of these games, players are asked to commit racial genocide as the objective of the game. While Jews are not the sole "antagonists" in these games as a variety of white supremacist bogeymen appear as targets for racial annihilation, as *Ethnic Cleansing* suggests, Jews are often considered the secret mastermind, part of the long-standing racist claim about a world-wide conspiracy that stretches back to the fictitious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* from the early decades of the twentieth century or the notorious Nazi propaganda film *The Eternal Jew* (1940).[49] In neo-Nazi games, players are tasked with "saving" the white race from racial miscegenation by annihilating supposed "threats" to racial purity. As the opening to *Ethnic Cleansing* claims, "The Race War has begun. Your skin is your uniform in this battle for the survival of your kind. The White Race depends on you to secure its existence. Your peoples [*sic*] enemies surround you in a sea of decay and filth that they have brought to your once clean and White nation. Not one of their numbers shall be spared."[50] While these games are vile on multiple levels, what is perhaps most disturbing about them is that, in a particular way, they are actually *more* historically accurate and representative of the experience of the Holocaust than the mainstream games in that they show the almost total destruction of Jews, even if they do so for entirely tendentious reasons. For while these games are morally repugnant and distort history to justify racial hatred, they nonetheless point to a single fundamental truth: Nazi evil is a consequence of the Holocaust.

While I am less interested in the specific game play or plot structure of these games, I am concerned with the ramifications of leaving the Holocaust to neo-Nazis. What happens if only neo-Nazis address the Holocaust? Here I believe the real implications of the Nazi and occult link is perhaps at its most dangerous. In his ruminations on the nature of modern morality in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), which I have borrowed for the title of this chapter and opening epigraph, Friedrich Nietzsche

suggested that, when we peer into the abyss, the abyss peers back; that when fighting monsters, one must guard against becoming a monster. Does engaging with the Holocaust and attempting to understand mean that one must guard against becoming a Nazi? Perhaps such a fear is one reason for the avoidance of the Holocaust by the video game industry, but I am not so sure: as numerous scholars have insisted over the years, explaining does not mean excusing; understanding does not entail condoning.[51] Then why has the video game industry consistently avoided the Holocaust in favor of using the occult as the root of Nazi evil?

The question of economics is important. Since the costs of producing video games has escalated to previously unfathomable heights with many recent games having budgets well surpassing the $200 million mark, the importance of producing successful products (and if at all possible, a franchise!), has certain inbuilt conservative tendencies that shifts subject matter away from the more adventurous and controversial toward more tried, tested, and true formulas. Furthermore, the very medium requires a tight balancing act to reconcile the demands of image, sound, narrative, and game play that often obliges video games to dispense with complex plot structures in favor of simplistic background stories enabling players to quickly get to the action. Finally, the moral justification for killing an endless stream of evil antagonists necessitates a black and white adversary, which precludes emphasizing genocide as the root of Nazi criminality. Thus, medium, genre, and economics all work as inhibiting factors steering video games away from a sustained engagement with Nazism and the Holocaust.

But if video games are to stand next to film as the preeminent visual medium of the twenty-first century, and have the power to influence through their mass-marketed vision of the past, then they need to move away from one-dimensional depictions of Nazism, and begin a more nuanced engagement with the destruction of European Jewry in the same way that mainstream motion pictures have done with recent films, such as *Schindler's List* (1993), *Life Is Beautiful* (1997), *The Boy with the Stripped Pyjamas* (2008), and many others. For all the problems that arise from these Hollywood interpretations of the Holocaust—and scholars have endlessly debated them resulting in a rich literature—they have nonetheless all put genocide on the agenda for critical public debate and not left genocide to the Far Right fringe.[52]

Mainstream video games are inching ever closer to the Holocaust. In recent iterations of several of the best-selling video games in history, both the *Call of Duty* and *Medal of Honor* franchises have seen protagonists die over the course of game play and forced players to confront questionable moral choices, firsts in the history of video games.[53] Other games, such as the *Grand Theft Auto* franchise, has increasingly moved toward less black and white protagonists and adversaries that demand difficult considerations from players. From the opposite direction, gamers are

increasingly demanding ever more complexity from their games, which are moving as close to reality as possible. These confrontations with multifaceted subject matter and game play suggest that gamers want morally complex questions from their medium. It remains to be seen whether these shifts will be made vis-à-vis the Holocaust. But by leaving the Holocaust to neo-Nazis, the video game industry is setting a dangerous precedent. Because it is over the terms of debate and the control of the past, where the real consequences of mobilizing the occult, the supernatural, and the paranormal to "explain" Nazism manifests itself in a threatening manner. By arguing that the supernatural "accounts" for Nazism, by making Nazism "sexy," by using the occult to "explain" Nazi evil, video games remove any complexity in our understandings of Nazism and why it became attractive to so many. Rather it is on the level of the irrational, the illogical, and the improbable that Nazism is explained, thus removing the need to look closer at contemporary society. The focus on one-dimensional digital Nazis makes the world safe from real Nazis, and herein lies the real danger that the stock caricature of Nazis in popular culture has for contemporary society. Once video games begin mobilizing the Holocaust, neo-Nazis will lose their hegemony over the past, which—as George Orwell put it memorably—controls the future. And while I believe that prognostication should best be left to fortune-tellers, it does perhaps seem fitting that a chapter on Nazism and the supernatural in video games should end with divination.

Notes

[1] See the essays collected in Sara Buttsworth and Maartje Abbenhuis, eds., *Monsters in the Mirror: Representations of Nazism in Post-War Popular Culture* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010).

[2] Malathi Nayak, "FACTBOX—A look at the $66 billion video-games industry," *Reuters*, June 10, 2013, accessed January 16, 2015, http://in.reuters.com/article/2013/06/10/gameshow-e-idINDEE9590DW20130610.

[3] Entertainment Software Association, *Essential Facts about the Computer and Video Game Industry: 2013 Sales, Demographic and Usage Data* (Washington, DC: ESA, 2013), 2.

[4] Eric Bleeker, "While GTA 5 Sales Boom, These 3 Video Game Franchises Are Still King," *The Motley Fool*, October 16, 2013, accessed January 16, 2015, http://www.fool.com/investing/general/2013/10/16/while-gta-5-sales-boom-these-3-video-game-franchis.aspx.

[5] Shane Richmond, "Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 breaks sales records," *The Telegraph*, November 11, 2011, accessed January 16, 2015, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/video-games/video-game-news/8884726/Call-of-Duty-Modern-Warfare-3-breaks-sales-records.html#.

[6] George Gush and Andrew Finch, *A Guide to War Gaming* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1980), chap. 2; and Elliott M. Avedon and Brian Sutton-Smith, "Military Uses," in *The Study of Games*, ed. Elliott M. Avedon and Brian Sutton-Smith (Huntington, NY: Robert E. Krieger, 1979), 271–77.

[7] The potential conflict was gamed beforehand by both Nazi and Soviet general staffs. See John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad: Stalin's War with Germany*, vol.1 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 1–9.

[8] See Ambrose A. Clegg, Jr., "Games and Simulations in Social Studies Education," in *Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning: A Project of the National Council for the Social Studies*, ed. James P. Shaver (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991), 523–29; Henk A. Becker, "The Emergence of Simulation and Gaming," *Simulation & Gaming* 11, no. 1 (March 1980), 11–25; Samuel A. Livingston and Clarice Stasz-Stoll, *Simulation Games: An Introduction for the Social Studies Teacher* (New York: Free Press, 1973), 1–3; and Donald R. Wentworth and Darrell R. Lewis, "A Review of Research on Instructional Games and Simulations in Social Studies Education," *Social Education*,37, no. 5 (May 1973), 432–40.

[9] For the relationship between the military and the video game industry, see James Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001); and J. C. Herz, *Joystick Nation: How Videogames Ate Our Quarters, Won Our Hearts, and Rewired Our Minds* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1997), chap. 16.

[10] See Ronald Smelser and Edward J. Davies, *The Myth of the Eastern Front: The Nazi-Soviet War in American Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 187–222; and James F. Dunnigan, *The Complete Wargames Handbook: How to Play, Design, and Find Them* (New York: Morrow Quill, 1980).

[11] Martin C. Campion, "A Historian and His Games," *Simulation & Gaming* 26, no. 2 (June 1995), 175–76; and "*HMR* Forum: Games, Simulations, and Teaching," *History Microcomputer Review* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1986), 13.

[12] The game manual underlines these points further: "Imagine that you are the Panzer General. . . . Go from triumph to triumph, invading and seizing the capitals of Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and ultimately the United States of America. Can you achieve a place in history? . . . In PANZER GENERAL there is no substitute for victory." *Panzer General Game Manual* (Sunnyvale, CA: Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1996), 1, 27.

[13] See Smelser and Davies, *The Myth of the Eastern Front*; and Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung, ed., *Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944; Ausstellungskatalog* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1996).

[14] See Wolfram Wette, *The Wehrmacht: History, Myth, Reality*, transl. Deborah Lucas Schneider (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); and Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[15] Henry Lowood, "A Brief Biography of Computer Games," *Playing Video Games: Motives, Responses and Consequences*, ed. Peter Vorderer and Jennings Bryant (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 25–28.

[16] See David Kushner, *Masters of Doom: How Two Guys Created an Empire and Transformed Pop Culture* (New York: Random House, 2003), 87–123.

[17] See Alison McMahan, "Immersion, Engagement, and Presence: A Method for Analyzing 3-D Video Games," in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, ed. Mark J. P. Wolf and Bernard Perron (New York: Routledge, 2003), 67–86.

[18] Kushner, *Masters of Doom*, 95.

[19] Kushner, *Masters of Doom*, 97.

[20] See James Campbell, "Just Less Than Total War: Simulating World War II as Ludic Nostalgia," in *Playing the Past: History and Nostalgia in Video Games*, ed. Zach Whalen and Laurie N. Taylor (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2008), 183–200.

[21] Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter, *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 111–12; and Tanya Krzywinska, "Hands-On Horror," in *ScreenPlay: Cinema/Videogames/Interfaces*, ed. Geoff King and Tanya Krzywinska (London: Wallflower Press, 2002), 219.

[22] On Blavatsky, see Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: The Ariosophists of Austria and Germany, 1890–1935* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1985), 18–23.

[23] On the *Ahnenerbe*, see Michael Kater, *Das "Ahnenerbe" der SS 1935–1945: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturpolitik des Dritten Reiches* (Stuttgart: Deutscher Verlags-Anstalt, 1974). On Schäfer, see Christopher Hale, *Himmler's Crusade: The Nazi Expedition to Find the Origins of the Aryan Race* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2003); and the first-hand account, Ernst Schäfer, *Berge, Buddhas und Bären: Forschung und Jagd in geheimnisvollem Tibet* (Berlin: Paul Parey, 1933). On the T4 program, see Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

[24] On the Thule Society and Atlantis, see David Luhrssen, *Hammer of the Gods: The Thule Society and the Birth of Nazism* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2012), 4, 28, 31, 163.

[25] Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 107–27.

[26] See David J. Skal, *Screams of Reason: Mad Science and Modern Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998); and Andrew Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

[27] Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, 83–90.

[28] Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, 137.

[29] Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 337–83.

[30] See Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, 137.

[31] Rayne was the first of many video game characters to appear naked in *Playboy*, only supporting the claims that characters like her exemplify the negative portrayal of women in video games. See "Gaming Grows Up," *Playboy: U.S. Edition*,

October 2004. Cf. Steven J. Kirsh, *Media and Youth: A Developmental Perspective* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2009), 137.

[32] There is a large literature on the depiction of women in video games, but see Yasmin B. Kafai, Carrie Heeter, Jill Denner, and Jennifer Y. Sun, eds., *Beyond Barbie and Mortal Kombat: New Perspectives on Gender and Gaming* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008); and Justine Cassell and Henry Jenkins, eds., *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

[33] Susan Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism," in *Under the Sign of Saturn* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980), 73–105.

[34] On Nazisploitation, see Daniel H. Magilow, Kristin T. Vander Lugt, and Elizabeth Bridges, eds., *Nazisploitation! The Nazi Image in Low-Brow Cinema and Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2012); and Marcus Stiglegger, *Sadiconazista: Faschismus und Sexualität im Film* (St. Augustin: Gardez!, 1999).

[35] See Peter Hoffmann, *The History of the German Resistance, 1933–1945*, 3rd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

[36] Philip Jenkins, *Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[37] Andrew Darley, *Visual Digital Culture: Surface Play and Spectacle in New Media Genres* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 152; and Margit Grieb, "Fragging Fascism," in *After the Digital Divide? German Aesthetic Theory in the Age of New Media*, ed. Lutz Koepnick and Erin McGlothlin (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), 192.

[38] "No Swastikas," *TV Tropes*, accessed January 16, 2015, http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/NoSwastikas.

[39] Itself a reference to Himmler's celebration of the thousand-year anniversary of Henry the Fowler's death in 1936. See Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun*, 124–25.

[40] See Karl Hüser, *Wewelsburg 1933–1945: Kult- und Terrorstätte der SS* (Paderborn: Verlag Bonifatius-Druckerei, 1982).

[41] Erik Wolpaw, "Mortyr 2093—1944 Review," *Gamespot*, January 26, 2000, accessed January 16, 2015, http://www.gamespot.com/reviews/mortyr-2093-1944-review/1900-2542646/.

[42] John Walker, "A Death Is for Life, Not Just for Quickload," *Rock, Paper, Shotgun*, May 12, 2011, accessed January 16, 2015, http://www.rockpapershotgun.com/2011/05/12/a-death-is-for-life-not-just-for-quickload/. "Death," *Giant Bomb*, accessed January 16, 2015, http://www.giantbomb.com/death/3015-725/.

[43] Jonathan Kay, "Defying a Taboo: Nazi Protagonists Invade Video Games," *New York Times*, January 3, 2002, G6.

[44] To push this counterfactual further: if the Nazis were defeated in 1940 France—since the game would necessitate player victory to enjoy success—then the Holocaust would not even take place, which would in turn remove the moral justifications for a FPS featuring Nazi adversaries.

[45] ZOG is an acronym for "Zionist Occupation Government" or "Zionist Occupied Government," an antisemitic conspiracy theory claiming that a world-wide Jewish conspiracy controls the world. See Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun*, 19, 22–24.

[46] Ellie Gibson, "Racists Launch PC Game," *Eurogammer.net*, July 18, 2005, accessed January 16, 2015, http://www.eurogamer.net/articles/news180705racists.

[47] Julia Scheeres, "Games Elevate Hate to Next Level," *Wired*, February 20, 2002, accessed January 16, 2015, http://www.wired.com/culture/lifestyle/news/2002/02/50523.

[48] See Anti-Defamation League, *Racist Groups Use Computer Games to Promote Hate against Blacks, Latinos, and Jews* (2002), accessed January 16, 2015, http://www.adl.org/combating-hate/domestic-extremism-terrorism/c/racist-groups-use-computer.html.

[49] See Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, 2nd ed. (London: Serif, 2006); and Stephen Eric Bronner, *A Rumor about the Jews: Reflections on Antisemitism and "The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[50] Lawrence Kutner and Cheryl K. Olson, *Grand Theft Childhood: The Surprising Truth about Violent Video Games and What Parents Can Do* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 152–53.

[51] See, for example, Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, with a new afterword (New York: HarperPerennial, 1998), xix–xx.

[52] See Aaron Kerner, *Film and the Holocaust: New Perspectives on Dramas, Documentaries, and Experimental Films* (New York: Contiuum, 2011); Jean-Michael Frodon, ed., *Cinema and the Shoah: An Art Confronts the Tragedy of the Twentieth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010); and Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Films and the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[53] Jordan Minor, "Red Cross Suggests Video Games Punish War Crimes," *PC Magazine*, October 8, 2013, accessed January 16, 2015, http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2425359,00.asp.

12: The Wewelsburg Effect: Nazi Myth and Paganism in Postwar European Popular Music

Oded Heilbronner

> *Historians have not given [racial thought, Germanic Christianity, and völkisch mysticism] much serious attention, for they have regarded this ideology as a species of subintellectual rather than intellectual history. It has generally been regarded as a façade used to conceal a naked and intense struggle for power, and therefore the historian should be concerned with other and presumably more important attitudes toward life. Such however was not the case.*
>
> —George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*

Introduction: What Was the Wewelsburg?

There are many legends associated with the castle of Wewelsburg near the city of Paderborn in North Germany.[1] One relates that the saga of Wewelsburg is about the "last battle at the birch tree," in which a "huge army from the East" was beaten decisively by the "West."[2] Another says that Wewelsburg was the home region of the ancient Germanic warrior Herrmann the Cheruscan.[3] But the most influential legend about the Wewelsburg, which is still current, is that of the connection between Heinrich Himmler, the SS, and Wewelsburg in the 1930s and 1940s. Wewelsburg was intended to be a place of worship (*Kultstätte*) and spiritual center for the SS—Himmler's Valhalla.[4]

Wewelsburg was initially intended to be a training center of the SS Race Office (*Rasseamt*), though it was not used for regular training purposes.[5] Rather, stimulated by the occult-inspired runologist and SS-Officer Karl Maria Wiligut, Himmler undertook renovating the Wewelsburg as the central meeting place of the SS group leaders. After the completion of the renovation, every group leader of the SS (*Gruppenführerkorps*) was to meet there regularly, and each newly promoted group leader was to be sworn in on the SS race and blood laws. Himmler also decided that the skull rings (*Totenkopfringe*) of deceased SS men were to be solemnly

preserved in the Wewelsburg. Courses for SS-officers in pre- and early history, mythology, archaeology, and astronomy took place there regularly.[6]

Himmler's efforts to create an elite group of Nazi warrior-priests failed, and his occult- and pagan-Germanic musings never became the official religion of the Third Reich. But nor did the persistent myth of Nazi occultism, as exemplified by Himmler's activities at the Wewelsburg, end with the collapse of the Third Reich. Indeed, while Himmler's activities at the Wewelsburg attracted few proponents in the Third Reich, this peculiar brand of Nazi mythology and religion found a new lease on life among occulist, neo-Nazi, pro-"Aryan"-groups during the 1970s and the 1980s, especially in the neofolk rock music scene. This surprising resurgence of interest in Nazi occultism and mythology is what I call the Wewelsburg Effect.

Although I will briefly describe some manifestations of the Wewelsburg effect in post–Second World War popular culture chiefly between 1970 to 1990 (in part 2), my main intention is to connect the Wewelsburg myth to the music of some contemporary neofascist rock bands, above all the British band Death in June (which I discuss in part 3). By concentrating on the music and the lyrics of this band as the primary case study, I can identify how the unsuccessful attempts by Himmler and his SS colleagues' to create a Nazi mythology and religion around Wewelsburg turned into a reality within the underground music scene in Europe by the end of the twentieth century.

My argument is that musical scene helped to create a dangerous environment for the proliferation of "alternative" histories tainted with the biases of the extreme right in recent years. Alternative histories to the Third Reich have been slowly aestheticized and now adopted as just one of many popular culture symbols. This "negative" history (the SS and Wewelsburg) has been adopted by today's youth (the right-wing extremism is chiefly a youth phenomenon)—in stereotypically rebellious fashion—based on the idea that the antithesis of mainstream opinion must by definition be best, and has all this worked together with the development of an increased number of mediums, most notably the Internet. Finally, as Ian Buruma argues, young people are "returning to the images of the previous dictatorship [that is, the Third Reich and the SS] as a rebellion" against mainstream culture, against their parents' culture, and against their own past.[7]

I. The Myth of Nazi Occultism in Western Popular Culture

Before discussing the Nazi occult legacy in postwar European popular music, it is important to remind the reader that there were important

occult and other pagan religious elements in the contemporary Third Reich.[8] As many of the contributions to this volume indicate, there was a profound fascination with occult and esoteric practices across early twentieth-century Germany and Austria; the Nazis were not immune to these wider cultural and intellectual trends.[9] Indeed, the NSDAP's origins in the esoteric Bavarian Thule Society is well known, as is the occult-infused ariosophic literature that inspired aspects of Nazi doctrine, as well as inspiring some Nazi leaders to search for Aryan origins in central Asia, Tibet, and the lost continent of Atlantis. Himmler and the SS were, of course, a leading force in such efforts.[10]

But the point of this first section is not to revisit the fascinating (if complex) history of occultism in interwar Germany and the Third Reich. Rather, I would like to emphasize here that the putative fascination with occultism that we associate with the Third Reich has certainly persisted in postwar Western culture. An indulgence in esoteric fantasies, even alternative universes, comprise a widespread and general phenomenon. Young people who go to rock concerts, dress in punk style, make underground movies, attend the Gothic-style festival in Leipzig or pagan gatherings in Stonehenge, and play Dungeons and Dragons have become an important element of mainstream cultural life in the West. The unprecedented publishing success of the Harry Potter books, the proliferation of discussion groups and fan websites devoted to fantasy worlds, such as Paganism and Satanism, Middle Earth and Star Wars, and the popularity of multiplayer online role-playing games and fantasies and pagan, satanist websites all provide clear evidence that occult fantasies have persisted in postwar popular culture. Nor, as Michael Saler has recently observed, is this popular fascination a form of regression, marginality, and escapism but an important ongoing cultural attempt to question, examine, and recast the idea of modernity.[11]

How did these trends express themselves after the war in those streams of popular culture that celebrated the legacies of Nazism? Official memory culture might sound like something stable, conservative, static, but there are multiple dynamics and many variations in the discourse of official memory in general and, in our case, the memory of Nazi Germany. Ian Buruma calls this the "multi-narratives" of the Third Reich.[12] Although many contemporary scholars and the initial generation of postwar historians were interested in the mystical aspects of Nazi Germany, most research dealing with the topic has been conducted outside academia. However, in recent years, it is possible to trace an "occultural flow" between official memory culture and popular culture going in both directions when dealing with Nazism. George Mosse's suggestion from 1962 mentioned above has once again become *salonfähig* (socially acceptable) in official memory culture. This mythical aspect described by Eva Kingsepp as "a dominant characteristic of much, or even most, of today's mediated popular history, not the least the history of Nazi

Germany and the Second World War."[13] Indeed, this "occultural flow" between official memory culture and popular culture has increased in the last few decades of the use of Nazism, its symbols and theories, across Western popular culture.[14]

Many good German writers used to say "the Germans can't keep their devils in the basement; they have to let them out." But, as the British writer Martin Amis suggests, it's no longer the Germans—or not merely the Germans—that we need to worry about.[15] We must consider "the discreet (dark or kitsch) charm of Nazism," a concept that such veteran philosophers and historians, such as Susan Sontag and Saul Friedländer, have used in various ways to warn against the danger of being attracted by this "charm," which today plays a central role in visual culture.[16] Indeed, Hitler, the Nazis, the Holocaust, and particularly Nazi artifacts (memorabilia), have become a profitable business, among which Nazi visual symbols are prominent (in pornograpy, fetishism, books, video games, films, rock bands, fashion items,[17] souvenirs, badges, and zombie culture). Nazi occult symbols and fantasies also play an important role in fantasy and science fiction internet games, as Jeff Hayton argues so persusasively in this volume. The reason for "the discreet (dark) charm of Nazism," which apparently has even attracted many Israelis since the period of "Stalag pulp fiction," is the unique combination that Nazism seems to offer of black magic, of occult theories, and of the cult of satanism of the European radical right-wing—which appeared already in the nineteenth century with cold-blooded, technocratic, rational, aesthetic murderous intent, accompanied by academic sophistication.[18] This combination is well described by Jonathan Littell in his novel *The Kindly Ones*, and many satanic sects, neofolk rock groups and white power groups incorporate it in their activities today in central, eastern, and northern Europe, as we will see in the next section.

Hence many researchers, including Israelis and Jewish scholars, are drawn to the intellectual and aesthetic possibilities that new trends in visual, material, and popular culture offer for interpretation of "the Nazi beast," both for personal reasons and because of its uniqueness in the Western cultural landscape in recent centuries.[19] As David Katz has argued, "Much more needs to be done on this subject [Nazi occultism and its impact], in order to understand the appeal of Nazism to a cultivated people. What is striking, however, is the way in which these aspects or romanticism and mysticism were woven together into what amounted to a kind of occult religion more than a detached body of knowledge . . . the emphasis on esoteric religious faith in the 20th-Century would have enormous consequences on present day culture."[20] Instead of revealing new dimensions of Nazi horror, many postwar intellectuals and artists alike end up falling into the trap of propagating this macabre fascination—what I have referred to above as the Wewelsburg effect.[21]

II. The Wewelsburg Effect: Wewelsburg Fantasies in the First Decades after the War

Since the 1950s, when the actual history of the mythology Himmler and some of his followers constructed was less known than today, some authors attempted to fill the gaps in research with their imagination, especially the religious aspects of the SS as an "Order" (*Orden*). It is in this immediate postwar period that the actual history of Nazi occultism and pagan religion began to get obscured and magnified by elements of fantasy and mythology. Walter Schellenberg, former chief of the foreign news service in the main security office of the Reich, published his memoirs posthumously in 1956.[22] In them, he wrote that Himmler modeled the SS on the organizational principles of the Jesuit Order and that the Wewelsburg was the big "SS monastery" in which a "secret consistory" met every year to engage in exercises and practices in concentration. Heinz Höhne's book, *The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS* (1967), which portrayed the SS as a "schwarzen gegenloge" (satanic counterlodge) of the Jesuit Order, contributed to the popularization of such myths.[23] Höhne described a 35-meter long and 15-meter wide dining room in Wewelsburg in which Himmler set up his "[King] Arthur Panel" and held spiritualist-type meetings with the "twelve chosen." Höhne called Wewelsburg "Himmler's Grail."[24]

Such relatively sound observations by eyewitnesses and reputable scholars soon become supplemented in esoteric circles and popular culture by less well-substantiated myths about the Wewelsburg, about the SS, and about Nazi occultism. In the 1960s, a variety of fantastic literature appeared and continues to flourish even now in esoteric circles. In this literature, it is claimed that the true history of Nazism, hitherto hidden from professional historians, can only be explained through theories about secret societies.[25] In this scenario, the Wewelsburg began to take center stage as the secret inauguration center for the rituals of the SS, where the highest initiates met on the lines of the Arthurian knights. It was "the magical and spiritual centre of the Order, the magical centre of the new Thule (Society), . . . the nerve centre of the Black Order, where its most sacred and secret rites were performed by its greatest initiates," and a laboratory from which the corpus of the Germanic god-people would arise.[26]

A good example of proliferation of the Wewelsburg myth in postwar European and American society is its place in satanic sects. The most important of them are the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set during the 1970s. The Church of Satan was the largest occult organization in the USA, led by Anton Szandor LaVey. LaVey worked in circuses, carnivals, and burlesque houses as a lion tamer and musician. Under the influence of another magician, the English master of the Ordo Templi Orientis Aleister Crowley and his followers, he founded the Church of Satan in

1961 in San-Franscisco. The church was greatly influenced by Nazi theories, anthems, and performances. One of his disciples, Michael A. Aquino, a former US army officer, rebelled against LaVey and in 1975 founded his own church, the Temple of Set.[27]

The Temple of Set had a deep fascination with Nazi occultism. Like other orders derived from the Church of Satan, the temple was impressed by the romantic Germanic magical tradition and its influence on Nazism and the SS.The SS, says Aquino, "embodied a living blueprint for the ideal National Socialist state," which was governed "according to irrational principles." Aesthetics and design were considered important: the leaders of the SS "both followed and encouraged practices that, in the context of our Satanic ritual, included specific design for both operative and illustrative effect."[28]

In order to experience this mystical aspect himself, in 1982 the temple leader Aquino traveled to Wewelsburg.[29] On the afternoon of the October 19, 1982, from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m., Aquino practiced a magic ritual in the *Crypt* (Hall of the Dead [*Totenstätte*]), where Himmler had allegedly conducted ritual magic. This became known as the "Wewelsburg working." Many stories circulated about this "working," and in the occult scene it gained a legendary and notorious reputation.[30] One book on satanic ritual claims, for example, that Aquino read "a satanic mass" in the Crypt. According to another account, he tried to connect through "meditations and invocations . . . with the spirit of the former SS leaders." Such legends were encouraged by the fact that although Aquino wrote down the objectives and results of his ritual, he did not describe the working itself. A few years later, however, he described his experience there:

> It [the fantastic literature] was certainly vague, inaccurate, and ignorant. I think they (the authors) knew only that the castle had been of central/metaphysical importance to Himmler, who was famous for his occult and ancient-wisdom interests, so it was easy for them to speculate that "satanic rituals" (a term they used very loosely and inaccurately) were practiced there. The same writers often called Hitler a "Satanist," though he was nothing of that sort. And I don't think that even occultists like Himmler or Hess would have considered themselves "Satanists" at all. . . . By the time I visited it, (. . .) I had a tremendous appreciation of the Wewelsburg's significance, and could sense the same power radiating from it, and particularly the North Tower, that I think Himmler did. Perhaps this is only partly the "memory" of the castle itself, and partly its location in terms of Ley lines (energetic power lines that cover the world according to the view of geomancy) and other geophysical influences. (. . .) Essentially it was the castle itself, and its Walhalla, that "created" the working. I merely perceived and responded to it.[31]

According to Aquino, Nazi Germany was a country in which various forms of black magic were particularly strong. Even if the Nazis themselves did not consider their actions to be such, the SS, for its part, practiced higher black magic according to the criteria of the temple.[32]

The Church of Satan's fascination with the Wewelsburg is merely the most prominent example of how the SS religious center became a key symbol in the neo-Nazi cults, especially in Europe and among young people.[33] The Black Sun, which has its roots in ancient religions and by the end of the nineteenth century had become a symbol for many radical right-wing and *völkisch* (racialist) groups who adopted racial and quasi-Christian rituals, was one of the Wewelsburg ornaments and a favorite SS symbol that decorated the Hall of Valhalla in the northern tower of the castle. In recent decades, neo-Nazis groups discussed the symbol and its meaning a great deal in Germany, England, New Zealand, and Scandinavia.[34] The German neofolk band Sol Invictus (Unconquered Sun) wrote,"As knights of the sun we are returning home / we will be the new nobility / rare scions of our own rank / we were orphaned and the journey was long / the darkness did not swallow us / we rose up / the children of the sun."[35] It is in such songs, as well as in popular culture that the Wewelsburg effect is most in evidence and potentially most problematic in providing a revisionist occult mythology about the Third Reich in the twenty-first century.

III. Fantasies and European Myths in Contemporary Popular Music: The Neofolk Subculture

Background—The Euro Neofolk Scene

One of the popular cultural manifestations of the Wewelsburg effect in recent decades is the euro-pagan scene, especially the neofolk music genre, which attracts many singers and bands.[36] Since the beginning of the 1990s, many countries in Europe have become centers for neofolk music and pagan youth subculture. Their lyrics, music, representations, and pronouncements express revulsion against what they perceive as the rationalist, production-driven, homogenizing aspects of modern society with its supposedly alienating effects on the individual,which in many cases coupled with a nostalgia for the past and a fascination with ethnic whiteness, dark visions, and death.[37] Their radical protest has involved both a militant fascist aesthetic and a fundamental critique of what they view as an inhuman, one-dimensional society.

In popular music, the neofolk subculture is situated, as Dominik Tischleder argues in a booklet attached to the *Looking for Europe* CD

compendium, "somewhere between the Gothic/Dark Wave scene and circles of avangardist noise-music enthusiasts. For many neofolk artists, their artistically transformed theme—mostly literary, mythological, esoteric and historical [European] references—occupies a central place: thus, their unifiying bond is defined more aptly by such thematic commonalities rather than by a common musical language."[38] Fascist, Nazi, and radical rightist references regularly surface in neofolk music. Many groups (and their followers) are well informed about the history of the National Socialist movement and the Holocaust, and as Emily Turner-Graham argues, all this information has been translated into "the use of [Nazi] images . . . and has been gathered together by neofolk groups and fans alike."[39] English musician Paul Roland, answering a question about the motivation behind his attraction to Nazism, said, "It is because I have such a strong positive outlook on what lies beyond this world . . . and a different understanding of the nature of what is called evil." Boyd Rice, anotherof the key figures in the neofolk scene, explained that he was fascinated by the Nazi uniform, by the swastika, by the Black Sun, and by other symbols of European paganism because of "the aesthetic nature of their appearance."[40] Suggesting yet another kind of motivation—shock value—the leader of the British euro-pagan rock band Ostara notes, "To play devil's advocate for the most demonic movement in history [Nazism] is still heresy."[41]

It is significant to note that Ostara (a goddess in Germanic paganism)[42] and other groups use Nazi imagery not because they necessarily believe in Hitler's political and ideological message, but because they wish to challenge contemporary cultures in Europe, raise voices against what they see as the disintegration of its "whiteness," and delineate a period of "interregnum" (that is, an era between the European "heroic" past and its allegedly imminent resurrection). Anton Shekhovtsov argues, "The specific stylistic expression of the theme of the interregnum lies outside the realm of [neofolk] music itself. While one may rightfully consider that the images of ruins featured on album covers and/or booklets refer to the theme of Europe's death, it seems more reasonable—given [Julius] Evola's overwhelming popularity among apoliteic [avoidance of factions] artists—to link such images to the theme of the interregnum."[43] Julius Evola, the reactionary Italian esotericist, philosopher, and spiritualist, has been cited as an influence on neofolk groups.[44]

As the preceeding discussion suggests, the key theme of protest linking all neofolk musicians is the question of European identity, and a romantic rebellion against a rational-multiculturalist-technological Europe. As Douglas Pearce, the leader of Death in June, one of the most famous and controversial bands in the scene, argues, "Whatever [the scene] may be . . . the term euro-centric should be in it."[45] Neofolk eurocentrism manifests a fascination with Nordic symbols and references,

which are ubiquitous in the scene. The groups mentioned above believe, as Stephane François argues, "that European civilization originates from the North. With this belief, they take up some of the racist German ideas of the beginning of the twentieth century, affirming the Nordic origin of European civilization. They are also interested in ideas of the ethnic unity of the Europeans. This liking for Indo-European studies leads them to sink their culture more deeply into this domain, which is often lacunar or nonexistent."[46] But neofolk music also makes clear references to fascist movements, protofascist thinkers, and, most important, Germanic legends and heroes, and its aesthetic in some ways resembles the visual culture of the Third Reich and especially that of the SS. Neofolk comprises, in short, some of the best evidence of a contemporary "Wewelsburg effect," and no band embodies this effect better than the British group Death in June.

"Every War Has Its Artistic Consequences": The Wewelsburg Effect, the Neofolk Pagan Scene, and the Neofolk Band Death in June

> Sons of Europe
> Sick with Liberalism
> Sons of Europe
> Chained with Capitalism
> On a marble slab of Yalta
> Mother Europe
> Was Slaughtered[47]
>
> Then my loneliness closes in
> So I drink a German Wine
> And drift in dreams of other lives
> and greater time[48]

Death in June (DiJ) is an English rock band. It combines neofolk music, images and themes related to Nazism and European fascism, racialist statements, and an affinity for neopaganism, esoteric spirituality, and traditionalism—praising the putative way of life of premodern Europe.[49] A fascination with Nazism is at the centre of the group's interest; their name is an explicit reference to the Night of the Long Knives, when some SA members and certain opponents of Nazism were massacred by the SS. DiJ has even recorded the Nazi anthem, the "Horst-Wessel-Lied."[50]

DiJ is not a typical white neo-Nazi rock band: they do not dress in black shirts or shave their heads. However, their unabashed support for fascist ideology and aesthetics is just as strong as that of other neofolk groups. The band's use of paganism and fascist symbolism, and their explorations of decadence, corruption, and occultism go far beyond shock tactics. DiJ's message goes hand in hand with other Gothic, neofolk

scenes that sympathize with Nazi phenomena, especially the aesthetic manifestations of the SS. Pearce, the central figure in DiJ, has always been careful to conceal his political beliefs and avoid controversy, but a close examination of the band's interests and activities suggests where his feelings and commitments may lie.[51] For example, as noted, DiJ repeatedly use fascist and Nazi symbols in their albums and on stage, including the death's-head (worn as a pin by SS soldiers), the Life Rune (a pagan symbol), the death's-head under the title "We Drive East," and the Black Sun (another symbol used by the SS). On DiJ's album *Östenbräun* (together with the band Les Joyaux de la Princesse), there is a song ("A Rose for SD") which, it seems, is dedicated to the criminal Nazi security force, the *SD* (*Sicherheitsdienst*). On one of the album's three different covers, there is a photo of a *Waffen-SS* soldier, and on another there is a photo of the Spear of Desity, a famous occultist symbol. The band also adopts fascist lyrics. Their song "Circo Massimo" from their *Take Care and Control* album adopted a chorus from a fascist marching song. The title of their *Operation Hummingbird* album comes from a Nazi military operation aimed at creating gravity-defying aircraft. Writing in the neo-Nazi music promotion network *Blood and Honour*, one fan has described how "twenty-five years ago my musical world was turned upside down" by DiJ. The fan's comments describe one of the band's performances. "Two men take to the stage dressed in SS [camouflage uniforms] and start to pound a military beat on kettle drums draped in *Totenkopf* banners.[52]

Yet DiJ are not the only neofolk artists to take up these symbols and images. Others, including Boyd Rice, Dernière Volonté, Les Joyaux de la Princesse, and Krepulec, dress in military or quasi-military uniforms for performances or promotional photographs. Turner-Graham, who studies the pagan-neofolk subculture, notes that other notable neofolk groups have borrowed or adopted Nazi names and concepts, like Blood Axis, Luftwaffe, Kapo, and Strength through Joy. Just as the Nazis themselves borrowed certain symbols from the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century *völkisch* movement (and derisively discarded others), so too do these new interpreters of the fascist aesthetic pick and choose among an array of symbols. Runes adorn their websites and CD covers alongside, as we saw in the case of DiJ, for example, SS-esque death's head symbols and the image of a leather-gloved hand clutching a rolled-up whip. Der Blutharsch, from Vienna, are well-known exponents of the style and have employed the pagan *Sig* rune (as used by the SS) and the iron cross surrounded by oak leaves as their symbols. They are renowned for perfoming at concerts by the light of flaming torches, to the sound of martial drumming while dressed in uniform-like costumes replete with jodhpurs, knee-length leather boots, leather cross-straps across their chests and runic patches on their shirt sleeves.[53]

Those in the scene emphasize their musical and lyrical image as "cultural soldiers" who keep the flag flying in the fight against "the age of

decay and democracy."[54] In 1992, during Yugoslavia's bloody civil war, as part of his Pan-European propaganda campain, Pearce visited the front line and the HOS Miliz (Croatian fascists). Pearce made several live recordings in Croatia and then released them as a two-CD set called "Something Is Coming: Live and Studio Recordings from Croatia" that carried the red-white national flag of Croatia. Proceeds from the CD went to a Croatian fascist military hospital. That same year, DiJ backed out of the Dark Xmas festival in Hamburg after the organizers issued a statement condemning a spate of fascist attacks on immigrants in Germany. In 1994, DiJ refused to play at the Festival of Darkness because the show was promoted as being against racism and neo-Nazism.DiJ songs were included in a 1996 tribute to Leni Riefenstahl, the well-known Third Reich film director. A CD [of songs from the film?] was published by VAWS (Verlag und Agentur), a right-wing record label issued by Werner Symanek, who is active in the rightist scene in Germany. VAWS has released similar tributes to Nazi artists, such as Arno Breker and Josef Thorak.

DiJ, Neo-Paganism and the Wewelsburg Legacy

If DiJ displays a deep fascination with the darkest pages of recent European history, they have a particular interest in the esoteric aspects of the SS. This constitutes a form of what has been called "black romanticism," which finds links between the SS and esotericism. Musicians attracted to paganism (though apparently not DiJ) have traveled to SS sites like the Wewelsburg.[55] As Stephane François writes, neopaganism imagines a "traditional" past that Europeans lost and seek to reengage with:

> (Neo)religious paganism is definitely a legacy of romanticism, especially in its rejection of the Enlightenment, of the liberalism that developed from it, and of technological modernity. . . . Among the neo-pagans, on both the left and right, there is . . . a will to return to a tribal and/or clan paganism of the traditional societies, self-managing and self-sufficient, gathering freely in the larger units. In fact, the democratic idea of the neo-pagans is based on a system inspired by an idealized vision of the social systems of antiquity, above all the Celtic and Germanic,an organic European system.[56]

Some neofolk bands simply say that they are pagans, or adepts of some pagan form of thought—especially right-wing paganism. They stand for the rejection of Christianity because of what they regard as its false and corrupt manifestations, which in turn form an obstacle, they hold, to the realization the "true self" supposed to have existed in premodern times. Again, DiJ plays an important role here. They sing, "On your pale history / Jesus bids us bleed / Blood Victory . . . Crushed in the corner /

Piercing and transfixed . . . / Mary's pallid sow / Jesus bids me shine? / Blood Victory / Blood Victory / Loki bids me gleam / Hurrah!"[57]

The impression DiJ's darker symbols make on young people is echoed clearly in one of their fans'comments: "I like the darkness of Death in June's imagery, words and music. . . . I guess there must have been something in there which reminded me of those childhood war games. . . . I rationalised, with lines fed from interviews in fanzines,that they were simply exploring the darker side of human nature."[58] Other fans describe their music as "Satanic Music for Good Children."[59]

As noted, one of the major characteristics of DiJ songs and the neopagan scene is an ethnocentrism centered around northern European, white, mediaevalist elements, and a condemnation of multicultural society. The latter is seen as a manifestation of the decline of European values and the victory both of corrupting Western universalism, standardization, and homogenization and of the mixing of cultures.[60] "Europe" or "the West" in DiJ songs is used in an ethnic, even racist, rather than a geographical sense, and eurocentrism is coupled with a European nationalism that is often quite forthright. As François reminds us, a collection entitled *The Orb Weaver—Notre domicile est l'Europe*, a disc which includes europagan and noneuro-pagan bands playing neofolk music released in 2001 on the German music label *Thaglasz*, was distributed by the DiJ fan club. In 2001, the fan club issued on the same label the pan-European three-LP compilation *Der Waldgänger*, named after a famous essay written by Ernst Jünger in 1951 where he called for a pure and simple life in the forest. The forest, for Jünger, was a symbol of "supra-temporal Being" or "the Ego" and, by "retreating" into it, "the wanderer in the forest" (*Waldgänger*) could resist the moral corruption of the interregnum (that is, the Europe of the 1950s, after the defeat of Nazi Germany).[61]

They're making the last film
they say it's the best
And we all helped make it
It's called the Death of the West
the kids from Fame will all be there
Free cocacola for you!
And all the monkeys from the zoo
Will they be extras too?
They're making the last film
they say it's the best
And we all helped make it
It's called the Death of the West
A star is rising in our northern sky
And on it we're crucified
A chain of gold is wrapped around this world
We're ruled by those who lie[62]

Epilogue

The lure of Nazi occultist symbols continues to exert an attraction even today in many branches of popular culture.[63] I have tried to trace one such manifestation—in popular music. While it must be conceded that there is some degree of theatricality in the fascistic poses adopted by the bands discussed here, their apparent fascination with satanist, pagan, and medieval symbols—which resemble those favored by Himmler and his followers—is worth noting nevertheless. For some musicians, Nazi fantasies and myths present present possibilities for expressing a dissatisfaction with cultural life in Europe today. What I have called the myth of Wewelsburg draws our attention to this longing for a different Europe—white, clean, and built on tribal and premodern foundations. The subculture I have here described, in the words of Susan Sontag, lets "Nazi material enter the vast repertory of popular iconography."[64] To pharaphrase Sontag's essay on Leni Riefenstahl, then "the trick is to filter out the noxious political ideology [of the neofolk, pagan subculture], leaving only their 'aesthetic' merits."[65] The fusion of neofolk subculture, neo-Nazism, and the extreme Right with pop-rock cultures should give us pause. The neofolk movement and its many offshoots spread increasingly widely today via the Internet, challenging official cultures of memory among an ever widening group of (often young) people. This might be the most dangerous heritage of the "Wewelsburg effect."

Notes

[1] Karl Hüser, *Wewelsburg 1933–45: Kultstätte des SS-Ordens* (Paderborn: Münster Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe, 1987); Jan-Eril Schulte, ed., *Die SS, Himmler und die Wewelsburg* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2009).

[2] Hüser, *Wewelsburg*, 3.

[3] Hüser, *Wewelsburg*, 3–4.

[4] Heinz Höhne, *The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS*, trans. Richard Barry *(Der Orden unter dem Totenkopf: Die Geschichte der SS)*, 3rd ed. (New York: Pan, 1969), 172–74; Walter Schellenberg, *The Schellenberg Memoirs* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1956), 32–33; Jan-Erik Schulte, "Die SS in Wewelsburg: Weltanschauliche Hybris—terroristische Praxis: Auf dem Weg zu einer Gesamtdarstellung," in *Gedenkstättenarbeit und Erinnerungskultur in Ostwestfalen-Lippe: Ein abschließender Projektbericht für die Planungswerkstatt Erinnerungskultur: Geschichte in Ostwestfalen-Lippe 1933–1945*, ed. Juliane Kerzel (Büren: Planungswerkstatt Erinnerrungskultur, 2002), 208–20.

[5] Schulte, "Die SS in Wewelsburg," 209–10.

[6] Schulte, "Die SS in Wewelsburg," 209–10; Daniela Siepe, "Die Rolle der Wewelsburg in der phantastischen Literatur, in Esoterik und Rechtsextremismus nach 1945," in Schulte, *Die SS*, 488–510; Kerzel, *Gedenkstättenarbeit*, 276–90.

[7] Ian Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (London: Atlantic, 2009), 188–89.

[8] Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); Eric Kurlander, "Hitler's Monsters: The Occult Roots of Nazism and the Emergence of the Nazi 'Supernatural Imaginary,'" *German History* 30 (2012): 528–49. From a nonacademic standpoint, Trevor Ravenscroft, *The Spear of Destiny: The Occult Power behind the Spear which Pierced the Side of Christ* (New Beach: Sphere, 1973).

[9] Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

[10] Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun*, chap. 6; Kurlander, "Hitler's Monsters"; Siepe, "Die Rolle der Wewelsburg," 492; Francis King, *Satan and Swastika: The Occult and the Nazi Party* (London: HarperCollins, 1976); Bill Yenne, *Hitler's Master of the Dark Arts: Himmler's Black Knights and the Occult Origins of the SS* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith, 2010); Christopher Hale, *Himmler's Crusade: The True Story of the Nazi Expedition to Tibet* (London: Wiley, 2004).

[11] Michael Saler, *As If: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1–11.

[12] Ian Buruma, *Wages of Guilt*, 21.

[13] Eva Kingsepp, "Hitler as Our Devil?" in *Monsters in the Mirror: Representations of Nazism in Post-War Popular Culture*, ed. Maartje Abbenhuis-Ash and Sara Buttsworth (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010) 30; Daniel H. Magilow et al., eds., *Nazisploitation: The Nazi Image in Low-Brow Cinema and Culture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012); Gavriel Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) is a bold example of the use of Nazism in popular literature.

[14] "According to trade magazine *The Bookseller*, there were no fewer than 850 new titles about the Third Reich published in the United Kingdom in 2010 (up from 380 in 2000—that's more than double in ten years)." "Nazi Gold: Publishing the Third Reich," accessed May 28, 2015, http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00zf4hz.

[15] Quoted by Martin Amis, "The Supreme Scourge of this Country's Topmost Scum and Lowest Dregs Takes on the Nazis," *Independent*, June 14, 2013. Later we will see that it is not only Germans who deal with these devils.

[16] Susan Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism," in *Under the Sign of Saturn* (New York: Picador, 1980), 73–108; Saul Friedländer, *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984). I paraphrase Gilad Atzmon, "There Is No Business like Shoa Business," http://www.gilad.co.uk/writings/there-is-no-business-like-shoah-business-by-gilad-atzmon.html. For further discussion of this issue, see Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (New York Verso, 2000); Alvin H. Rosenfeld, *The End of the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

[17] *The Guardian* reported in 2013 that a boy was sent home from a Staffordshire school after his Hitler costume was deemed inappropriate for a Second World War

fancy-dress day. "The Boy Dressed as Hitler: Are Nazi Costumes ever Acceptable?," accessed May 28, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/shortcuts/2013/oct/04/boy-dressed-hitler-nazi-costumes. See also the collection of articles in Daniel H. Magilow, Kristin T. Vander Lugt, and Elizabeth Bridges, eds., *Nazisploitation! The Nazi Image in Low-Brow Cinema and Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2012); Abbenhuis-Ash, *Monsters in the Mirror*. See also Marcus Stiglegger, *Nazi-Chic und Nazi-Trash: Faschistische Ästhetik in der populären Kultur* (Berlin: Berg, 2011). For fascination with the Eastern Front and the German army activity there in popular culture, see the video game Barbarossa. "Four Reasons This One Kickstarter Proves Humanity Is Doomed," accessed May 28, 2015, http://www.cracked.com/quick-fixes/4-reasons-this-one-kickstarter-proves-humanity-doomed/, and the book by Ronald Smelser and Edward Davies, *The Myth of the Eastern Front: The Nazi-Soviet War in American Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[18] There are different definitions of satanism. Most popular is "adversary of mainstream values." See Chris Mathews, *Modern Satanism: Anatomy of a Radical Subculture* (London: Praeger, 2009), 97. However, satanism is used today in both a narrow and a broad sense. Here I use the narrow sense in which satanism "designates the cult which defiles or travesties Chiristian rites." Wade Baskin, *Dictionary of Satanism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1972), 289. For the unique combination of irrationalism and rationalism in Nazism, see Christian Ingrao, *Believe and Destroy: Intellectuals in the SS War Machine* (Oxford: Polity, 2001).

[19] Alon Confino, *A World Without Jews: The Nazi Imagination from Persecution to Genocide* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014); Noah Benninga, *Materiality at the Zero Degree: The Material Culture of Prisoners in Auschwitz* (PhD thesis, Hebrew University, 2014).

[20] David Katz, *The Occult Tradition: From the Renaissance to the Present Day* (London: J. Cope, 2005), 176–77.

[21] Many examples can be found in Magilow, *Nazisploitation!* 199–294. An example from Israel is an article by Boaz Neumann, "Between the Brown and the Green: Nazism, Holocaust, Ecology," *Theory and Criticism (Hebrew)* 40 (Summer 2012): 137–58.

[22] Schellenberg, *Schellenberg Memoirs*, 32–33.

[23] Höhne, *Order of the Death's Head,* 172–73.

[24] Höhne, *Order of the Death's Head*, 173; Peter Longerich, *Himmler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 294–96.

[25] Ravenscroft, *Spear of Destiny*; Goodrick-Clark, *Black Sun*, chp.6.

[26] Siepe, "Die Rolle der Wewelsburg," 493–94.

[27] Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun*, 214–15.

[28] Michael Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, 6th ed. (New York: CreateSpace, 2009, http://www.xeper.org/maquino.

[29] Mathews, *Modern Satanism*, 86–87.

[30] The event described here is taken from Siepe, "Die Rolle," 500. Siepe based her account on a letter she received from Aquino.

[31] Siepe, "Die Rolle," 500.

[32] Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun*, 228–31; Siepe, "Die Rolle."

[33] Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun*, 14–17, 108–9; Siepe, "Die Rolle."

[34] See n. 10 and Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun,* 189–210.

[35] Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun*, 150.

[36] Jonathan Sheehan, "Paganism," in *The Classical Tradition*, ed. Anthony Grafton et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 675–79.

[37] I don't mean to say that the neofolk scene is marked chiefly by racism, dark visions, and death. Many bands declare a firm and clear attitude against racism. A bold example is the Slovenian postindustrial band Laibach. Other examples include The Moon and the Nightspirit, Cult of Youth or Flëur. They all adopt a certain eurocentrism and medievalism but do not translate their music and lyrics directly into racist politics, dark visions, and death.

[38] Looking for Europe, The Neofolk Compendium, Prophecy Productions CD, ASIN: 393687803X 2005, 40. On the cover of the CD one can discern the iconic German Iron Cross. On the CD itself there is the sign of the swastika.

[39] Emily Turner-Graham, "'Keep Feeling Fasci/nation': Neofolk and the Search for 'Europe,'" in Abbenhuis-Ash, *Monsters in the Mirror*, 204.

[40] Paul Rolland, Interviews 1980–2010, booklet attached to his CD *In Memorium*, 49; Boyd Rice on Nazis from "Pearls Before Swine," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zkunTr6Yog.

[41] Turner-Graham, "Keep Feeling Fasci/nation," 215.

[42] Ostara's leader Richard Leviathan began his musical career working with Douglas Pearce of Death in June in a band called Strength through Joy, after the state-sponsored leisure agency in the Third Reich.

[43] Anton Shekhovtsov, "Apoliteic Music: Neofolk, Martial Industrial and 'Metapolitical Fascism,'" *Patterns of Prejudice* 43, no. 5 (2009):. 431–57.

[44] Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), chap. 3. In the 1930s Evola tried to join the SS and visited Wewelsburg. Many neofolk bands reference Evola's ideas and works, including, among others, Death in June, Above the Ruins, Sol Invictus, and Current 93. As the neofolk scene develops, many bands reference and provide links to a range of fascist-traditionalist-right-wing thinkers. See Peter Webb, "Statement on Neo-Folk and Post-Industrial Music," accessed on May 28, 2015, http://www.whomakesthenazis.com/2010/10/peter-webb-statement-on-neo-folk-and.html.

[45] Looking for Europe, 43.

[46] Stephane François, "The Euro-Pagan Scene: Between Paganism and Radical Right," *Journal for the Studies of Radicalism* 1 (2007): 47.

[47] "Every war has its consequences" is a quote from Douglas Pearce (of Death in June), in the 2006 documentary film *Behind the Mask*. DiJ, "Sons of Europe," on *Burial* (London: Leprosy Discs, 1984).

[48] DiJ,"Runes and Men," on *Brown Book* (London: New European Recordings, 1987).

[49] See Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*.

[50] On the album *Brown Book*, NER, 1987, the "Horst-Wessel-Lied" was renamed "Brown Book." François, "Euro-Pagan," 40.

[51] The following is based on several books and websites. Robert, "Misery and Purity: A History and Personal Interpretation of DiJ" (New York: Jara Press, 1995); "My Time as a DiJ Fan," http://www.whomakesthenazis.com/2010/11/what-ends-when-symbols-shatter-my-time.html; "Death in June: A Nazi Band?" http://libcom.org/library/death-in-june-a-nazi-band; the official DiJ website, http://www.deathinjune.net/index2.htm.

[52] The description was quoted in James Cavanaugh, "Death in June Coming to Electrowerkz," accessed on May 28, 2015, http://www.whomakesthenazis.com/2012/11/james-cavanagh-death-in-june-coming-to.html.

[53] Emily Turner-Graham, "Trauermarsch: German History as Remembered by the Extreme Right," *Reconstruction, Studies in Contemporary Culture* 10, no. 4 (2010), accessed May 28, 2015, http://reconstruction.eserver.org/Issues/104/Turner-Graham_01.shtml.

[54] Shekhovtsov, "Apoliteic Music," 16.

[55] François, "The Euro-Pagan Scene," 40.

[56] François, "Euro-Pagan Scene," 42–45. François finds "a profound doctrinal unity" among all neo-pagans. This consists of "the praise of radical differentialism," "using communitarianism as a solution to multiculturalism," and "criticism of western thought, [as] individualist and standardizing." François notes a number of "fascinations" among the euro-pagan section of neo-paganism, notably fascinations with "bravery and virility," "the warrior," "the North," and "the dark pages of European history."

[57] DiJ, "Blood Victory," *The World That Summer*, NER, 1986. Francois, "Euro-Pagan Scene," 46.

[58] "What Ends When Symbols Shatter? My Time as a Death in June Fan," http://www.whomakesthenazis.com/2010/11/what-ends-when-symbols-shatter-my-time.html.

[59] "More Death in June," accessed May 28, 2015, http://satanicmusicforgoodchildren.blogspot.co.il/2012/05/more-death-in-june.html.

[60] Francois, "Euro-Pagan Scene," 46.

[61] Ernst Jünger, "Retreat into the Forest," *Confluence* 3, no. 2 (1954): 127–42; Shekhovtsov, "Apoliteic Music," 17.

[62] Death in June, "Death of the West" on *Burial* (London: Leprosy Discs, 1984).

[63] See n. 10.

[64] Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism," 79.

[65] Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism," 83.

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